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Second Session, 36th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 23 April 1998

Jeudi 23 avril 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 23 April 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 23 avril 1998

The first day of the second session of the 36th Parliament of the Province of Ontario commenced at 1500 pursuant to a proclamation of the Honourable Hilary M. Weston.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor was pleased to open the session by reading the speech from the throne.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

DISCOURS DU TRÔNE

Hon Hilary Weston (Lieutenant Governor): Mr Speaker, members of the Legislative Assembly, fellow Ontarians:

I am pleased to welcome you to the opening of the second session of the 36th Legislature — and deliver my first speech from the throne since becoming Her Majesty's representative 15 months ago.

Since last we met, Ontario has mourned the passing of five former members of the Legislative Assembly:

Edward Jolliffe, who sat in this House for five years, led the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, and twice served as leader of the official opposition.

Nick Leluk, founding executive director of the Council on Drug Abuse, representative of Etobicoke for 16 years and cabinet minister in two administrations.

Jim McGuigan of Kent county, a lifelong farmer who served his constituents with dignity and honour for 13 years.

Joseph Salsberg, a champion of human rights and equality who for 12 years represented the people of St Andrew as one of only two Communist MPPs in Ontario history. He later renounced Communism, but remained passionately committed to working people and to his community until his death in February at age 95.

Eddie Sargent, 15-year mayor of Owen Sound who went on to win seven provincial elections and serve for 24 years as one of the assembly's most colourful and feisty members.

Their beliefs spanned the political spectrum, but these five shared a mutual commitment to doing what each believed to be right. They stand as examples to us all.

Ontario's greatness derives both from the strength of its people and the richness of its natural heritage. In recent months these two have clashed as the power of nature has twice tested our collective courage and resolve.

January's historic ice storm disrupted lives and devastated communities in eastern Ontario. We were still rebuilding when spring floods inflicted further damage and distress on this region, and elsewhere in the province.

In each case, the fury unleashed by nature was surpassed by the selflessness, generosity and resourcefulness of Ontario's people.

People such as Edwin Grant of Cardinal, who lent portable generators and his time to pump out neighbours' basements and run furnaces — then drove 200 miles to Oshawa to pick up more generators.

And Anne Tackaberry of Addison, who walked door to door through her community, ensuring that the sick and elderly were warm and fed, and opening her home to those needing shelter.

And Rob Anderson and Calvin Johnson of McDonalds Corners, who stayed up all night, March 30, using Mr Anderson's equipment to pump out the basement of a neighbour's home on Dalhousie Lake, and also putting out a fire.

We pay tribute to these local heroes, to the many police officers, soldiers, emergency workers and volunteers, and to the thousands of individuals who opened their hearts during the recent states of emergency.

Indeed, this week, National Volunteer Week, we recognize all who give of themselves to assist the needy, guide the young, protect the vulnerable, comfort the infirm, and improve their communities.

We celebrate the impressive achievement of other Ontario heroes: the 50 athletes and the coaches, team leaders, medical staff and volunteers from this province who wore Canada's colours at the Nagano winter games.

We take special pride in the accomplishments of Ontario's medal winners:

Derrick Campbell, gold medallist in the 5000-metre speed-skating relay.

Elvis Stojko, silver medallist in figure skating.

Cassie Campbell, Lori Dupuis, Geraldine Heaney, Jayna Hefford, Becky Kellar, Karen Nystrom, Lesley Reddon, Laura Schuler, Vicky Sunohara: Ontario's members of the Canadian silver medal women's ice hockey team.

Kevin Overland, bronze medallist in long-track speed-skating.

Richard Hart, George Karrys, Collin Mitchell, Paul Savage and skip Mike Harris, silver medallists in men's curling.

We are equally proud of the nine Ontarians who one week later represented Canada at the 1998 Winter Paralympics.

We recognize these athletes for their dedication and competitive spirit: Jeff Dickson, alpine skiing; and Dean Delaurier, Jamie Eddy, Angelo Gavillucci, Robert La-

gacé, Hervé Lord, Shawn Matheson, Dean Mellway and Todd Nicholson, Ontario's members of the men's sledge hockey team, who brought home the silver medal.

Ontario officially endorses Toronto's bid to host the XXIXth Olympic Games and the XIIIth Paralympic Games in 2008. The games would showcase the new city to the world, boost tourism and create jobs.

We recognize not only our olympians and paralympians, but all athletes in the province, and the encouraging family and friends who contribute to their success.

After all, Ontarians' love of sport is fostered by the support of loving families. Who can forget mom and dad flooding the rink in the backyard? Or big brother getting up early to drive his little sister to practice?

The Overland family of Kitchener is just one example. Last month at the Ontario Winter Games, 16-year-old Amanda won the gold medal in senior women's 1,000-metre short-track skating. Older sister Cindy and older brother Kevin were both part of the Canadian team at Nagano.

After the medal ceremony, Amanda credited her sister and brother, saying, "I wouldn't have stayed with it if Kevin and Cindy hadn't kept me inspired and given me pep talks."

There are many more reasons for Ontarians to celebrate — so many accomplishments in which we take pride.

We recognize the deep honour bestowed upon the Catholic community, in Toronto and across the province, when Archbishop Aloysius Ambrozic was created a cardinal.

We share the excitement of Dave Williams, assistant professor in the department of surgery at the University of Toronto, as he orbits the earth on his 16-day mission aboard the space shuttle Columbia.

We congratulate Cornelia Wieman, whose contribution to psychiatric and consulting services for aboriginal people earned her a 1998 National Aboriginal Achievement Award. When she completes her residency later this year, Dr Wieman will become the only practising aboriginal woman psychiatrist in Canada.

We welcome the early success of the elk restoration project, and congratulate the many volunteers and agencies working to repopulate the herds of a magnificent animal that once roamed our province in great numbers.

We remark on the successful rehabilitation of the upper Grand River, which has restored this once polluted waterway into one of the world's pre-eminent brown trout fisheries. When trout season opens two days from now, anglers from around the globe again will visit Ontario to enjoy the result of a project to which the Friends of the Grand and so many others have contributed.

The economy, too, gives us reason for optimism.

All around, we see: Retail sales at an unprecedented level. Consumer and business confidence high. Housing starts up. Welfare rolls shrinking. Agriculture and food industries leading the nation in farm cash receipts and value-added food production.

And new jobs.

A net increase of over 341,000 new private sector jobs since September 1995.

261,000 new jobs since February 1997 alone.

The fastest job creation rate in all of Canada. And more Ontarians working than at any other time in this province's history.

1510

During the brief interval since this House last met:

Chrysler Canada and the Canadian Auto Workers announced the addition of a third shift at their Bramalea assembly plant, resulting in the creation of 1,000 new jobs.

Babcock and Wilcox Co decided to close a manufacturing plant in Texas and relocate most of the work to Cambridge, Ontario.

The PLM Group printing company in Markham continued its spectacular growth. In three years, its workforce has tripled to 300, and sales have tripled to almost \$90 million. Years ago, CEO Barry Pike and six other employees mortgaged their homes or otherwise found the cash to launch the company. Today he attributes his firm's growth to the "open for business" policies of the Ontario government.

Growth and success are not limited to large and medium-size firms. Small business job creation has exploded across the province, on main streets, in suburban malls and in industrial parks:

Centel Communications, a Mississauga small business owned by Al Battaglia, hired four new employees, bringing its total workforce to 13 — more than triple its size in 1995. Mr Battaglia represents the many small business owners who continue to create most of the new jobs in this province.

Your government was elected on a plan to turn the province around, strengthen the economy and create jobs.

All evidence confirms: The plan is working.

Your government is doing what it said. Its plan is working. Sound fiscal management is attracting investment. Tax cuts are creating jobs.

Votre gouvernement fait ce qu'il a dit. Son plan d'action marche. Une saine gestion fiscale attire les investissements. Les réductions d'impôt favorisent la création d'emplois.

The government's ultimate goals remain the same: a strong and prosperous economy. Good jobs for all. High-quality services for people. Opportunities for our children. And, as we enter the third millennium, a bright future for everyone.

The plan is working, and you, the people of Ontario, deserve the credit.

Change — even change for the better — is never easy. The first steps of progress are often difficult. Improvement requires the courage to change. Adjustment requires time.

For almost three years Ontarians have shouldered the burden of moving this province back on track. We can take pride in the result. Our sacrifices, our contributions, our determination to build a better future for our children and grandchildren are paying off.

One of people's most important contributions has been their continued advice and counsel about how to build a brighter future for Ontarians.

The magnitude of change required to pull Ontario from the brink of bankruptcy — the urgent need to kickstart the economy and create jobs — may at times have overshadowed the role and the importance of public input and participation.

Today the government renews the pledge to Ontarians made on the final page of the Common Sense Revolution. We are unconditionally committed to reaching our goal of a better Ontario for all, but we are very open to discussing how we get there.

Many people have already joined in the dialogue about Ontario's future. From participants at open forums and town hall meetings, to public servants offering suggestions on service improvements, to countless callers and letter-writers, thousands of Ontarians have offered welcome input that will be reflected in the government's plans for the months ahead.

For example, invited to contribute to the renewal of a strong united Canada, more than 75,000 citizens have shared their advice. Early in this session, MPPs will be asked to act on the will of the people thus expressed by considering a resolution to endorse the Calgary framework for unity.

One other thing that people have made clear to this government is that — while much has been accomplished — progress continues and work remains.

Most families are beginning to enjoy the benefits of a strengthened economy. But they want to ensure that the same opportunities are available to future generations. And they recognize that too many in this province remain unemployed or underemployed.

They've said that the government is headed in the right direction, but must take care that its reforms are implemented carefully and well.

They've expressed concern about the timing and pace of restructuring, and about its impact on people who need more time to adjust.

They agree that change must benefit everyone — that this rising tide must lift all boats.

To these Ontarians, an open reply: Your government is listening. Your government hears you. Your government will move forward with care.

It will move forward with care, but your government will move forward.

It will move forward because that, too, is what people have said.

They want all who need jobs to have jobs — fulfilling, secure, quality jobs on which to build hope for the future.

They want the tax burden on hardworking, middle-class Ontario families and on small businesses reduced to fair and acceptable levels.

They want the budget balanced and, after that, they want government to tackle the debt. They understand that the accumulated debt is a pent-up tax burden waiting to fall on their children and grandchildren.

These goals are shared by millions in this province who work hard, pay taxes, obey the law, raise families, and are active in their communities.

These goals are shared by millions of ordinary Ontarians who have said that government spends too much time catering to itself and to special interests, and not enough time working for them.

Three years ago, these men and women asked for change, trusting that it would benefit them.

To these Ontarians, a solemn pledge: Your government remembers. Your government will keep faith. It will stay the course until your goals are met.

After all, it is people such as these for whom the government is supposed to be working: People like 18-year-old Daryl Whitehead of St Catharines, who wants the chance for a good job with good pay and a bright future here at home.

He asks, "Will we have the same opportunities that my parents had, or even their parents?"

Your government is determined to give Daryl as many opportunities as he has dreams.

1520

It does so by creating an environment for job creation that attracts growth, investment, and jobs across the province.

Your government has already cut personal income taxes, payroll taxes and taxes on new homes. In fact, it has cut taxes 30 different times — cut taxes to create hundreds of thousands of jobs.

Consumers have responded by spending to stimulate the economy, and businesses by investing and creating jobs.

Witness the testimony of Brian Johnston from Monarch Construction in Toronto: "We have never felt so positive about putting our money back in the province of Ontario, something I could not have said five years ago when we were pouring millions of dollars into the United States."

Votre gouvernement restera fidèle aux politiques favorables à la croissance et à l'emploi, lesquelles seront la clé du succès des Ontariennes et Ontariens au XXI^e siècle.

Il poursuivra comme prévu sa politique de réductions d'impôts génératrices d'emplois.

Your government will hold fast to the pro-growth, pro-jobs policies needed to ensure that Ontarians succeed in the 21st century.

Job-creating tax cuts will continue as planned.

The government is committed to universities, colleges and apprenticeship and training programs that prepare young adults for future employment.

It will address the shortage of highly skilled workers, particularly in the area of high technology.

The government will explore every means of employing Ontario's advanced position in telecommunications hardware and educating, training and learning software to support lifelong learning that allows all of us to adapt to the ever-changing job market.

Understanding the role that a clean environment plays in attracting jobs and investment, your government is determined to improve our air and water quality through initiatives such as Drive Clean.

Recognizing the need for meaningful employment and training opportunities for the young people in rural Ontario, it will act on the recommendations of Sandi Shaw, Todd Ramsey, Lisa Alderman and Luc Lapensee, members of the Rural Youth Advisory Panel.

The government will continue its aggressive pursuit of economic development in northern Ontario by investing in the northern highway network and in the telecommunications infrastructure so vital to connecting even the most remote northern towns to the world.

Your government will support job creation in the tourism industry by marketing Ontario to the world, and encouraging Ontarians to explore the rich wonders of their own province, including the north.

It will continue to support working families who do not benefit from the existing institutional child care system — with priority given to parents who need help either to start working or to stay at work — and to those wishing to join the more than one quarter million people who have broken free of dependency on welfare.

The government will continue to provide the roads and other infrastructure necessary to support a competitive economy.

MPPs will be asked to consider legislation that readies our electricity industry for the challenges of competition; eliminates job-killing red tape; amends labour legislation, particularly as it affects the construction industry, in order to attract investment and create job opportunities; and ensures that no future government will be able to increase taxes without the approval of taxpayers through a referendum.

The government is committed to fair and equal treatment which guarantees Ontario workers and companies the same rights to work and do business in Quebec as that province's workers and companies already enjoy in Ontario.

The new Ontario Jobs and Investment Board, comprising some of the brightest leaders in business and the community, will seek the views of Ontarians as it leads the development of a winning economic strategy founded on three pillars: encouraging innovation, preparing people for tomorrow's jobs and creating an infrastructure that supports jobs and growth.

The government's pro-growth policies continue to give hope to people right across this province. They mean that Daryl Whitehead and others can look forward to a bright future here at home.

Government must also work for parents and students who demand a high-quality education that readies our children and grandchildren for the challenges of the 21st century.

Ontario cannot settle for achievement that is adequate or "good enough." We must judge our education system by results, not effort.

Our goal must be nothing less than excellence.

Only excellence will ensure that all students — such as Ann Fenton's grade 7 class at Credit Meadows Elementary School in Orangeville — are able to realize their full potential, acquire a lifelong love of learning, remain active

participants in their communities and achieve whatever goals they set.

Only excellence will guarantee our children the opportunities of decent, well-paying jobs. Only excellence will attract businesses to our highly skilled workforce. Only excellence will empower us to compete with Michigan and Ohio, Germany and Japan — with the world.

Only excellence will open doors and lift barriers for boys and girls alike. Only excellence will provide the opportunities that are so important to founder Larissa Vingilis-Jaremko and other members of the Canadian Association of Girls and Science, a national network of girls who want to learn more about science.

This government's reforms have positioned the education system to deliver excellence:

More dollars in the classroom and less money for waste, bureaucracy and trustees.

More of teachers' time spent teaching.

Standardized testing.

A back-to-basics curriculum.

And report cards that parents can understand.

1530

Let us look to the future: With these exciting reforms — so essential to quality education — now in place, we can focus all of our energies on ensuring that our children attain the results of which we know they are capable.

With structural reform complete, attention can shift to the three pre-requisites to high achievement: Students with the discipline and commitment to learn. Supportive parents at home. And qualified, dedicated teachers in the classroom.

Your government will continue to support students, parents and teachers in their drive for excellence:

At home and at school, opportunities for parental involvement in education will be enhanced and encouraged.

In addition to emphasis on the basics, partnerships with the private sector will ensure children's access to 21st century technology. This will assist all students and teachers in the province, including Andre Masella, Leo D'Aloisio, Margaret Socha and teacher Agatha Griffiths from All Saints Catholic School in Etobicoke, where computer literacy and technological studies have been a priority for years.

Standardized testing will be expanded, and more detailed results be made widely available.

Excellence and achievement, by both students and teachers, will be recognized and encouraged.

The government has already increased the funds available for early learning. World-renowned expert Dr Fraser Mustard and child advocate the Honourable Margaret McCain will head a study of early learning, and make recommendations on how best to prepare young and pre-school children for a lifetime of education.

Investment in early learning will help increase children's self-esteem, open the door to higher achievement, expand their understanding and horizons, and instil in them a joy of learning that will grow throughout their lives.

Our schools must be secure environments for learning and teaching — distinguished by discipline, responsibility and respect for others.

Students deserve excellence. Parents demand it. Teachers can deliver it. We must all work to make it happen.

Many Ontarians are still asking why at times it seems more attractive to be on welfare than to work hard and pay the taxes that support welfare.

Many others are asking to be freed from the cycle of welfare dependency — from being trapped in a system that fosters dependence and despair.

The government will continue to work for the benefit of all these citizens.

The best way to do so is to lift people off welfare and up into the workforce.

Just ask anyone who has felt trapped in the welfare system:

Such as Bob Fleming from Hamilton, who says mandatory work-for-welfare gave him new hope: "When I was on social assistance, it was degrading. Now, I'm doing a service to the community, I'm getting skills. I'm meeting people who might be able to give me a job one day and I'm getting a reference."

Or such as Marie Johnson, who in less than 18 months has gone from a daily struggle on welfare to a rewarding and responsible job as an office administrator. She says that work-for-welfare "gives people on social assistance a chance to increase their self-worth and enhance whatever skills they may have or develop new ones so that they're current."

Ontarians believe in the work ethic. So does your government.

Your government will move to the next phase of its plan to convert welfare into work:

It will expand mandatory work for welfare.

Votre gouvernement va passer à l'étape suivante de son plan de conversion de l'aide sociale en travail :

Il élargira le programme de travail obligatoire.

The ultimate goal is to ensure that every welfare recipient does something of value in exchange for his or her benefits.

It will increase the number of community service placements.

It will step up the crackdown on welfare fraud and abuse.

It will work to simplify a welfare system that still remains too bureaucratic and too complicated. Last year, for example, MPPs had to pass special legislation empowering the government to stop welfare cheques from going to people in prison.

Neither the people nor the government of Ontario will tolerate those who enjoy welfare benefits paid for by the Ontario taxpayer while they defy our laws and threaten the safety of hardworking citizens.

Through a Learning, Earning, and Parenting initiative the government will encourage young, single parents to stay in school and complete their education.

In some municipalities up to one half of child care fee subsidies are provided to welfare recipients; these parents can and should take part in workfare or learnfare.

Our ultimate goal must be that all parents on welfare benefit from mandatory workfare through access to child care.

Some groups and some unions continue to oppose the conversion of welfare into work. The leaders of one union say they will "target" non-profit agencies that help people get workfare placements and experience. Last month, leaders of another union announced plans to try to unionize workfare participants — giving rise to the prospect of participants collecting vacation pay or even going on strike for higher welfare benefits. These are real challenges that this government must and will overcome.

People who work hard and pay taxes — or who have settled into retirement after a lifetime of doing the same — demand that government guarantee health care that is not only modern but available, timely and close at hand.

When this government took office, Ontarians believed that health care was sufficiently funded — provided the money was spent more wisely, and waste and inefficiency were eliminated. Even so, this government has increased health care funding to its highest level in history.

There was also broad agreement that our health care system needed restructuring — that it needed to be updated, better coordinated and more integrated. In the words of Michael Strofolino, president of Sick Children's Hospital, "There were too many dollars in the hospital system tied up in duplication and inefficiency, in bricks and mortar rather than people; restructuring is essential to free that money and redirect it to patient needs."

Despite agreement on these goals, your government has heard, loudly and clearly, the voices of people concerned about the pace and the impact of change.

Voices of parents who want the security of knowing that hospitals are open and emergency services are available when their children need them.

Voices of grown children who worry whether sufficient supports will allow their parents to grow old in their own homes, or whether nursing homes and homes for the aged will be able to accommodate them.

Voices of patients who prefer a system that is based on people — doctors, nurses and other health providers — not just technology and machines.

1540

Your government has heard those concerns. They are real and legitimate. This government will move to address them.

Despite increasing need and a growing number of seniors, for almost a decade politicians did nothing to expand the number of long-term-care beds. Last year the government announced \$100 million in new funding for long-term-care facilities. Now, using the dividends from hospital restructuring, this government will soon announce a major initiative to increase significantly the number and quality of long-term-care beds.

The government will also announce substantial increases in community care, including such services as in-

home nursing, homemaking programs, supportive housing and services for people with physical disabilities.

These measures will ensure that nursing homes and homes for the aged have sufficient space to meet the needs of an aging population. They also will mean thousands more front-line nursing jobs, both in community services and in nursing homes and homes for the aged.

In addition to serving our seniors, these measures will have an impact that reverberates through the health care system — freeing beds in hospitals so that they can be more appropriately used for acute care and emergency patients.

Patient OHIP statements, a “smart” information system and enhanced investigation will help to address health care fraud.

The government supports the establishment of a health telephone hotline for seniors and others. This was a concept suggested to Premier Harris by Ruby Conway of Port Colborne.

Government must also stand on the side of women and men concerned about the safety of rural communities and urban streets, or the security of their homes, or violence in school corridors and playgrounds.

Steps are already being taken.

New laws will prevent convicted criminals from changing their names to hide past records, will allow police to warn communities of dangerous offenders, and already protect crime victims through a Victims’ Bill of Rights.

Young offenders are held in strict discipline programs that emphasize education and responsibility, not entertainment and recreation. Parents such as Mary Jo Ridgway say the programs give their children the chance for a new future. In the words of Mrs Ridgway, “Thank you for giving us back our son.”

New members with a new approach have been appointed to the parole board. As Scott Newark, former crown prosecutor and executive director of the Canadian Police Association, recently told the Crime Control Commission at its hearing in Burlington: “The result has been a lower parole grant rate for repeat offenders and, for the first time in years, the beginnings of lower crime rates. It’s no accident. Having the courage to make parole a privilege to be earned rather than a right to be demanded has resulted in increased public safety for the people of Ontario.”

While we take comfort in this observation, much work remains.

Many crimes go unreported. Many Ontarians continue to worry for themselves and their families.

In the words of Priscilla de Villiers, president of CAVEAT, Canadians Against Violence Everywhere Advocating its Termination: “Safety in the community is more than the absence of injury. We need to look at the culture of fear — it’s simply unacceptable.”

Whether in parking lots or sandlots, at bank machines or in backyards, on street corners or in streetcars, we all have the right not just to be safe but to feel safe. Your government will respond:

It will expand strict discipline programs for young offenders.

It will do everything necessary to support the law enforcement officers who protect our lives and safety at the risk of their own — committed individuals such as Detective Constable Russ Lillie, an undercover officer shot twice while trying to arrest an alleged drug dealer.

MPPs will be asked to consider legislation that responds to recommendations of the Crime Control Commission.

Ontario will continue to press the federal government and Parliament who actually make the criminal laws the provinces enforce. We all want a stronger, more effective Young Offenders Act, in line with the blueprint for reform that Ontario’s government has already provided to the federal justice minister; we want criminal sentences that are meaningful and actually served; we want criminal deportation to be an action, not a concept. Ontario’s government will ensure our voices are heard.

Your government will integrate and better coordinate services for crime victims under a new office for victims.

Your government will also take steps towards the creation of a registry of pedophiles and other convicted sex offenders; increased safety on urban streets and in schools; and protection for victims of domestic violence.

We stand on the threshold of a new century, a new millennium and a new future of opportunity for our children.

Our province has the capacity, the strength, the resources, the technology and, most importantly, the people — the entrepreneurs, the risk-takers, the skilled workers, the dedicated teachers and healers, the committed police officers and firefighters, the caring volunteers — to make that future one of promise and hope for generations to come.

Let us pledge together that we will create for our children — and their children after them — an Ontario prosperous and proud, the heart of a strong and united Canada, a leader in the world.

This is your government’s plan. This is your government’s commitment.

Members of the Legislative Assembly, I am confident that your deliberations this session will serve to make Ontario a better place for all.

Dieu bénisse l’Ontario. Dieu bénisse le Canada. Dieu protège la Reine.

God bless Ontario. God bless Canada. God save the Queen.

Her Honour was then pleased to retire.

Prayers.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I beg to inform the House that to prevent mistakes, I have obtained a copy of the speech from the throne which I will now read.

Interjections: Go ahead.

The Speaker: That’s where you’re supposed to say, “Dispense,” Mr Premier. Dispense? Agreed? Agreed.

Reading dispensed with.

1550

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Mr Harris moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 1, An Act to perpetuate an Ancient Parliamentary Right / projet de loi 1, Loi visant à perpétuer un ancien droit parlementaire.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Premier, any short comments?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): By long-standing tradition, the first bill introduced in the Legislature concerns an initiative that has not been mentioned in the speech from the throne. This practice, which dates back hundreds of years to the reign of Elizabeth I, symbolizes the assembly's independence from the crown and it reflects the collective rights of members to address the Legislature's own priorities before attending to other business.

While the custom is falling into disuse in this Legislature, principally after 1935, this government has defended the importance of the tradition as a symbol of the rights of all members in this chamber. I am confident that members of both sides of this House would agree that the Bill 1 tradition is worth upholding and it's worth celebrating.

The practice of introducing this pro forma bill, An Act to perpetuate an Ancient Parliamentary Right, a practice followed today in other parliamentary jurisdictions and once again in this House, is adopted to explain and record the constitutional importance of the first bill. I would say this first bill reconfirms the parliamentary tradition by its actual content, acknowledging the importance of the parliamentary custom and acknowledging the accountability of government and cabinet to this Legislative Assembly.

MOTIONS

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move that the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor to this House be taken into consideration on Monday, April 27, 1998.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Mr Sterling: I move adjournment of the House.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried. This House stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1556.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member / Député(e)	Constituency / Circonscription	Party / Parti	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Agostino, Dominic	Hamilton East / -Est	L	
Arnott, Ted	Wellington	PC	parliamentary assistant (Small Business) to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / adjoint parlementaire (secteur petites entreprises) du ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Baird, John R.	Nepean	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Finances
Barrett, Toby	Norfolk	PC	
Bartolucci, Rick	Sudbury	L	
Bassett, Hon / L'hon Isabel	St Andrew-St Patrick	PC	Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiles, de la Culture et des Loisirs
Beaubien, Marcel	Lambton	PC	
Bisson, Gilles	Cochrane South / -Sud	ND	deputy New Democratic Party House leader / chef parlementaire adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Boushy, Dave	Sarnia	PC	
Boyd, Marion	London Centre / -Centre	ND	
Bradley, James J.	St Catharines	L	deputy opposition leader, opposition House leader / chef adjoint de l'opposition, chef parlementaire de l'opposition
Brown, Jim	Scarborough West / -Ouest	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Correctional Services / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Services correctionnels
Brown, Michael A.	Algoma-Manitoulin	L	deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Caplan, David	Oriole	L	
Carr, Gary	Oakville South / -Sud	PC	
Carroll, Jack	Chatham-Kent	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Castrilli, Annamarie	Downsview	L	
Christopherson, David	Hamilton Centre / -Centre	ND	
Chudleigh, Ted	Halton North / -Nord	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Richesses naturelles
Churley, Marilyn	Riverdale	ND	Deputy Speaker and Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Présidente de la Chambre et Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Cleary, John C.	Cornwall	L	
Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony	Brampton South / -Sud	PC	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Colle, Mike	Oakwood	L	
Conway, Sean G.	Renfrew North / -Nord	L	
Cordiano, Joseph	Lawrence	L	
Crozier, Bruce	Essex South / -Sud	L	
Cullen, Alex	Ottawa West / -Ouest	L	
Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne	London North / -Nord	PC	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Curling, Alvin	Scarborough North / -Nord	L	deputy opposition House leader / chef parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition
Danford, Harry	Hastings-Peterborough	PC	parliamentary assistant (Agriculture and Food) to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / adjoint parlementaire (secteurs Agriculture et Alimentation) du ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales

Member / Député(e)	Constituency / Circonscription	Party / Parti	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
DeFaria, Carl	Mississauga East / -Est	PC	
Doyle, Ed	Wentworth East / -Est	PC	deputy government whip / whip adjoint du gouvernement
Duncan, Dwight	Windsor-Walkerville	L	
Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet	Durham West / -Ouest	PC	Minister of Community and Social Services / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Elliott, Brenda	Guelph	PC	
Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L.	Parry Sound	PC	Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances
Fisher, Barbara	Bruce	PC	parliamentary assistant (Rural Affairs) to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / adjointe parlementaire (secteur Affaires rurales) du ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim	Durham Centre / -Centre	PC	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Ford, Douglas B.	Etobicoke-Humber	PC	assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement
Fox, Gary	Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings / Prince Edward- Lennox-Hastings-Sud	PC	
Froese, Tom	St Catharines-Brock	PC	parliamentary assistant (Colleges and Universities) to the Minister of Education and Training / adjoint parlementaire (secteur collèges et universités) du ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation
Galt, Doug	Northumberland	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment / adjoint parlementaire du ministre de l'Environnement
Gerretsen, John	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	L	chief opposition whip / whip en chef de l'opposition
Gilchrist, Steve	Scarborough East / -Est	PC	parliamentary assistant (Municipal affairs – urban) to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / adjoint parlementaire (Affaires municipales – secteur urbain) du ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Grandmaître, Bernard	Ottawa East / -Est	L	
Gravelle, Michael	Port Arthur	L	
Grimmett, Bill	Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / adjoint parlementaire du président du Conseil de gestion
Guzzo, Garry J.	Ottawa-Rideau	PC	
Hampton, Howard	Rainy River	ND	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Hardeman, Ernie	Oxford	PC	parliamentary assistant (Municipal affairs – rural) to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / adjoint parlementaire (Affaires municipales – secteur rural) du ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles	Willowdale	PC	Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D.	Nipissing	PC	Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif
Hastings, John	Etobicoke-Rexdale	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Transports
Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris	Victoria-Haliburton	PC	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines, deputy government House leader / Président du Conseil de gestion, ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines, vice- leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Hoy, Pat	Essex-Kent	L	
Hudak, Tim	Niagara South / -Sud	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre de la Santé
Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron	Burlington South / -Sud	PC	Minister without Portfolio (Seniors Issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (affaires des personnes âgées)
Johns, Helen	Huron	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / adjointe parlementaire du ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Johnson, Bert	Perth	PC	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Johnson, Hon / L'hon David	Don Mills	PC	Minister of Education and Training / ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation

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Monday 27 April 1998

Lundi 27 avril 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 27 April 1998

*The House met at 1328.
Prayers.*

RESIGNATION OF MEMBER FOR NICKEL BELT

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I beg to inform the House that during the adjournment a vacancy has occurred in the membership of the House by reason of the resignation of Floyd Laughren, Esq, as a member for the electoral district of Nickel Belt, effective on February 28, 1998. Accordingly, I have issued my warrant to the chief election officer for the issue of a writ for a by-election.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ANNIVERSARY OF ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Mr David Caplan (Oriole): I rise today in remembrance of the Armenian genocide. April 24, 1915, marked the beginning of a planned and systematic effort by the Turkish government to eradicate the indigenous Armenian population; 1.5 million Armenians were the victims of a deliberate act of genocide.

Recognition is the first step in ensuring that these events do not happen again. To this day those who were responsible for the genocide have failed to acknowledge the events of 83 years ago. For the Armenian community, indeed for all of us, that wound cannot begin to heal until the Turkish government accepts responsibility and apologizes.

I would like to thank and recognize members of the Armenian community who are here today with us. In the gallery, among their number, are professor of genocide studies, Dr Vahagn Daderian, Rev Sarmazian, Aris Babikian, Yagsabet Alpay and Arby Gazarian. Arby was part of a group of Armenian youth who organized a candlelight vigil out here on Thursday.

This tragedy serves to remind us all that we must work together to challenge hatred, racism and intolerance. On this anniversary, I think it's important that all of us speak up to ensure that this never happens again. The tragedy of the Armenian genocide was recognized by this assembly in 1980, and I continue to encourage members to be resolved in our determination to have this act acknowledged.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I'm not really sure why, but the clock is counting up instead of down, so

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 27 avril 1998

when you do your statement, just note that you're done in 1.30.

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): They even messed up the clocks in this place.

Mr Speaker, I ask you the following question. What do the following people have in common: environmentalists, land use people, forest companies, mining companies, municipalities, citizens all across northeastern and northwestern Ontario? The answer is quite simple; it's called Lands for Life.

This government is trying to shove through a land planning process in a period of about a year and a half, something that should take, quite frankly, a good three or four years to do. As a result, there's not a person in northern Ontario who hasn't had something negative to say about this entire process.

What's even more infuriating is that as they move forward with the Lands for Life process, the government refuses time and time again to make sure that there is a good economic impact study done to determine what the economic impact of this particular initiative should be. We need to answer some very fundamental questions.

One of the first questions that comes to mind for myself, and I think for a lot of other people in northeastern Ontario, is, will this have a negative impact on jobs? I ask the minister across the way. He's the one who has to answer in the end. If the answer is yes, I think the minister has to go back and look at this thing all over again. At the very least, the government has got to slow this process down, they have got to give an opportunity to get a good economic impact study done to determine what the effect of Lands for Life is going to be on our northern economy. Only then can the government even think about going ahead. Anything other than that is nothing but a sham and shows that this government again is not wanting to listen to the people of this province.

VOLUNTEERS

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough-Ellesmere): I am pleased to report on an event that I had the pleasure of attending in my riding of Scarborough-Ellesmere last week. As part of its celebration of National Volunteer Week, on April 23 the Scarborough Association for Volunteer Administration hosted an event to honour volun-

teers in the community of Scarborough. The theme of this event was "Volunteers Open Doors to a Better World."

It was my pleasure to participate in this event, and I spoke to those in attendance about the value and importance of volunteering. I was also given the opportunity to present awards and personally thank these local heroes for their contribution to our community.

Eighteen individuals were honoured at this single event. Their volunteer activities included such things as providing services for the blind, caring for the elderly and supporting those with developmental disabilities. They also provide friendly visiting, meal assistance and counselling for youth, substance abusers and those in distress.

These 18 individuals who were honoured by the Scarborough Association for Volunteer Administration have touched the hearts and improved the quality of life for countless others in the community of Scarborough. I was proud to meet these volunteers and thank them for their efforts and talents, and at this time I would like to take this opportunity to once again say thank you.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): All Ontarians have had a taste of Mike Harris's recipe for Ontario. Some have died, some have cried, some have been sick and many have stayed awake at night worrying about tomorrow. Now, Mike Harris and the Ontario Tories want us to buy a new blend of finely ground Conservative coffee called the Taste Beyond 2000 blend.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): That's a prop.

Mr Bartolucci: I want to inform the people of Ontario that this coffee will do, beyond the year 2000, what Mike Harris's old recipe has done for Ontarians since 1995. It will leave Ontarians with a bad taste in their mouths; it will keep them awake at night worrying about further health care cuts. This blend of bitter taste for those concerned about our health care system will be the result of this coffee. For those of us concerned about education, this coffee is symbolic of the way in which our once world-renowned education system has been run through a grinding machine by this government. You see, the blend may be a little newer, it may be a little different and it may be a little flashier —

The Speaker: And it's a prop.

Mr Bartolucci: — but the reality is that it's the same old coffee and the same old coffee machine and the same brand of coffee that we've been experiencing since 1995, and we all know the side effects of that: heartburn, indigestion, lots of anxiety, sleepless nights and less security. If the people buy this blend of coffee, they'll be buying hemlock. No to Mike Harris and no to the Taste Beyond 2000 blend.

COMPENSATION FOR HEPATITIS C PATIENTS

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I would agree with the member for Sudbury that this government has not

learned any lessons and that the supposed face of compassion that they want to put on their actions is slipping very quickly. I of course am speaking about the way in which this government, along with the other provincial governments and the federal government, has treated hepatitis C victims in this country.

We had a very extensive study under Mr Justice Horace Krever and every possible angle on the tainted blood crisis was examined in the course of that. Mr Justice Krever concluded that there needed to be a very clear compassion in the government's treatment of the victims of hepatitis C, that they should stop being legalistic, should stop defining things around legal liability and have compassion and clarity about their need to treat the victims of tainted blood humanely.

Today in the gallery we have representatives from Hemophilia Ontario: David Mitchell, who is the president, Tom Smith, who is the executive director, and Kim Jepson, who is one of the many victims of hepatitis C among the haemophiliac community.

The Minister of Health promised Hemophilia Ontario that all haemophiliacs who have been infected with tainted blood would be compensated. She has broken this health promise, just as the government has broken its other health promises.

ETOBICOKE ECONOMY

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): This being the Legislature's first day of sitting in this calendar year, I am pleased to report on construction development in Etobicoke during 1997.

When I looked into this subject, I was curious about two things: How did it compare to the previous year, and what have been the changes since we took office? Answers to these questions on local activity can be found in the 1997 annual report for Etobicoke's own urban development program. It includes some telling data: The number of permit applications increased by 6%; there was major growth in residential sector construction, by 17%; and while the 1997 total value for construction in Etobicoke increased by 6% to \$260 million, it's not surprising that the same report shows it was a dismal \$147 million in 1994, the year before we took office.

Since then, our government has been taking action to make Ontario a better place to work, live and raise a family. Now, prosperity is returning to Ontario and Etobicoke presents evidence of that.

The interest for further growth in Ontario remains strong, consumer confidence has increased, over 340,000 new jobs have been created since we took office, and I remain determined and committed to seeing it continue.

1340

KHALSA DAY

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I rise today to draw attention to Khalsa Day, which was celebrated by Sikhs across the world, the day of unique significance

which talks about the 299th anniversary since the founding of the Khalsa order.

What I'd really like to relate today is how those precepts and that outlook is at work today in Canada. Yesterday I attended with some members from one of the local temples, or gurdwaras, at a hostel and shelter at 60 Richmond Street, and in there are some of the homeless people in the most difficult situations living in Toronto — not a nice place most of the time, despite the very good efforts made by Central Neighbourhood House.

Every week for the past year the members of this gurdwara have been bringing food down as part of their tradition, not just for Khalsa Day, not just for once a year, but every single week of the year they've been preparing food and sharing it because it's part of the tradition which they bring to our country and which is enhancing the quality of life of people here. It is a tradition that extends to each of the gurdwaras, having a kitchen where anyone may come and eat. In this case the people from the Canadian Sikh organization have been taking it upon themselves to bring relief to unfortunate Canadians of whatever background, of whatever religion, and I think it's very important for those of us in the rest of the traditions to appreciate what they're bringing to the quality of life here.

HAMILTON ISSUES

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): In the shadow of the government's attempts through its throne speech last Thursday to suggest that all is well in Ontario, I want to reflect on the reality in my own community of Hamilton by raising a number of issues and discussing how they are impacting as a result of this government's agenda.

First of all, we still have the disgrace of an environment minister who refuses to call a public inquiry into the Plastimet disaster. Every single group and every single individual who cares about community safety says there ought to be one. The only person in this province who says there doesn't need to be one is the Tories' Minister of Environment.

Downloading: Right now, Hamilton-Wentworth regional council and Hamilton city council are looking at increases of well over \$100 a year to property taxpayers to offset the downloading that this government has put down into our community, after they said it would be revenue-neutral.

Health care: St Peter's hospital is on the chopping block, Chedoke hospital is on the chopping block, Hamilton Psychiatric Hospital is on the chopping block. Our community is recoiling from your hand-picked commission's recommendations to close those institutions.

Education: Our public school board is still trying to determine how they're going to manage under the cuts that you've imposed.

The only people not complaining, the only people benefiting, are the wealthy, who are getting the greatest amount of your tax cut.

OLYMPIC ATHLETES

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): I'm pleased to rise today to pay tribute to Mike Harris. In his role as an international ambassador for Ontario and for Canada, Mike Harris has become admired and respected around the world. His achievements on behalf of our country are rock solid.

He's faced tough times and always emerges as the winner by a clean sweep in the end. He's a master at playing the angles, keeping up his guards and scoring points by filling the house. Mike Harris is a great sportsman. He works with his team, he inspires them, he leads them. They often call him "Skip."

Yes, Mike Harris's accomplishments in curling at the winter Olympics at Nagano, Japan, made Canada proud. Mike Harris and his team play out of the Tam-Heather Country Club located in my riding of Scarborough East. On behalf of all my colleagues, I offer congratulations to Mike Harris, Richard Hart, Collin Mitchell, George Karrys and Paul Savage.

I would also like to recognize four other outstanding Olympians from Scarborough East: Karen Nystrom, Laura Schuler and Vicky Sunohara of the silver-medal-winning women's ice hockey team, and Robert Legace, a defenceman on Canada's ice sledge hockey team, which won the silver medal at the 1998 Paralympics.

It's been only two months since the members of Team Canada returned home with a record number of medals, surpassing for the first time the medal tally of the Americans.

To all of these athletes, thank you and congratulations for representing us so well at the Olympic and Paralympic games in Nagano earlier this year.

DISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): On a point of personal privilege, Mr Speaker: Over the past few days, a section of our government's throne speech has been the subject of discussion and concern.

First, let me begin by apologizing to the Lieutenant Governor for any discomfort or embarrassment that she may have felt as a result of press reports subsequent to the reading of last Thursday's throne speech. Clearly, the contents of our government's throne speech are the responsibility of our government alone and should in no way reflect on Her Honour.

As most members in this House will know, a government's throne speech is a collaborative effort on the part of many ministries. As such, my ministry recommended that a section be included that would highlight the very positive efforts our government has undertaken in introducing strict discipline in Ontario. Further, we indicated that we had received very positive comments about the effectiveness of our strict discipline facilities from a woman who had particular knowledge of our program.

My ministry undertook the necessary steps to provide this section for inclusion in the throne speech. In doing so, we sought and received the woman's permission to include both her name and a specific quote. At no time did we intend to identify any young offender in this province, and I personally do not believe we in fact have done so.

That being said, I understand that the leader of the third party has asked for an investigation by the RCMP into this matter. I remain willing to offer whatever assistance I can to that process. In the meantime, given my respect for the office I've held for the past two and a half years and my high regard for the laws of our country, I believe I should step aside pending this process. Therefore, I have tendered my resignation from cabinet to the Premier and he has accepted, pending this review.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I beg leave to inform the House that during the recess the Clerk received the 48th, 49th, 50th, 51st and 52nd report of the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 105(g)(9), these reports are deemed to be adopted by the House.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on resources development and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 146, An Act to protect Farming and Food Production / Projet de loi 146, Loi protégeant l'agriculture et la production alimentaire.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed. The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): Pursuant to the order of the House of Thursday, December 18, 1997, I beg leave to present a report on pre-budget consultation 1998 from the standing committee on finance and economic affairs.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr Guzzo: It's not necessary. It's an excellent report and it is self-explanatory, Mr Speaker.

1350

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MEDICINE AMENDMENT ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MÉDECINS

Mr Kwinter moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 2, An Act to amend the Medicine Act, 1991 /
Projet de loi 2, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les médecins.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

LABOUR UNION AND EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ FINANCIÈRE DES SYNDICATS ET DES ASSOCIATIONS D'EMPLOYÉS

Mr Gilchrist moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 3, An Act to promote Full Financial Accountability of Labour Unions and Employees Associations to their members / Projet de loi 3, Loi visant à promouvoir la responsabilité financière complète des syndicats et des associations d'employés envers leurs membres.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (DRIVERS' LICENCES OF CERTAIN SCHOOL PUPILS), 1998

LOI DE 1998 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (PERMIS DE CONDUIRE DE CERTAINS ÉLÈVES)

Mr Wettlaufer moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 4, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to the drivers' licences of certain school pupils /
Projet de loi 4, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne le permis de conduire de certains élèves.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), Mr Pettit and Mr Grimmett exchange places in order of precedence for private members' public business and that Mr Young and

Mr O'Toole exchange places in the order of precedence for private members' public business, and that notwithstanding standing order 95(g), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot items 7 and 8.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c), the House shall meet from 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm on April 27, 28, 29 and 30, 1998, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.

WEARING OF DAFFODILS

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): As April is Cancer Month, I ask for unanimous consent of this House so that we may put on the daffodil to show our support for the fund-raising campaign for Ontario's number one preventable killer.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The member is seeking unanimous consent. Agreed? Agreed.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Before we continue, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the fourteenth group of pages to serve in this 36th Parliament: Kristan Aho, Kenora; Karen Chorney, Halton North; Lee Coleman, Frontenac-Addington; Daniel de Young, Perth; Jonathan Dignan, Brampton South; Robert Glasgow, Ottawa Centre; Trevor Grahl, Renfrew North; John Guenther, Durham East; Eunice Lam, St Andrew-St Patrick; Vincent Leung, York Mills; Jessica Lunny, from the fine riding of Etobicoke West; Laura Rashotte, Hastings-Peterborough; Adam Scharman, Kitchener; Rachel Skipper-Horton, Brantford; Jeffrey Southon, Halton Centre; Lana Vanderham, Hamilton East; Gian Paolo Vescio, Dovercourt; Ryan Wood, Victoria-Haliburton; Katherine Wu, Scarborough North.

Welcome, and I hope you enjoy your stay.

ORAL QUESTIONS

DISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Premier in connection with the

throne speech and the statement just made by the Solicitor General, and I want to follow up. I'm not sure if any more attention, focus and energy would go into anything that a government does as much as it would in the case of the preparation of the throne speech.

I think I'm asking a question that is being asked today by many Ontarians: How could this happen? The Solicitor General has done the right thing today: stepped aside. But I want to ask about the involvement of your office in this. In particular, I simply want to ask the Premier, how could this happen? Dozens of people must have pored over this speech before it was presented by the Lieutenant Governor in this Legislature. How could it happen?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the member opposite knows that there is a process that has been put into place that really precludes me from commenting. As well, Mr Runciman has done the very honourable thing and stepped aside pending any outcome of that process, investigation by the RCMP, and I think further comments are inappropriate.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, I think the Solicitor General now has removed himself from the fray to allow an investigation to take place, and I'm assuming that you are endorsing such an investigation, by the way. But that does not relieve you of the responsibility now to tell us what happened inside your office. All that the investigation will tell us is what happened with respect to the Solicitor General's ministry and his actions, but what I want to know now is about what happened inside your office.

Clearly somebody there at some point in time looked at the throne speech and said this was okay. Did you, Premier, or did you not obtain legal opinion regarding the presentation of that information in this Legislature?

Hon Mr Harris: I think the member knows it's not appropriate to comment. I'm actually surprised that he, as a lawyer, is now setting out the parameters for the RCMP. We will let the RCMP set out those parameters. Therefore, it's inappropriate.

Mr McGuinty: There's something else that I'm curious about. Were the actions that were taken today by the Solicitor General prompted by your office? Did you ask the Solicitor General to take the steps that he did today in this Legislature or did they come from the Solicitor General himself? It's a very simple question, very straight up. Did you prompt that or did he approach you?

Hon Mr Harris: You heard the statement from the Solicitor General; you heard what he said; you heard his statement that it was his decision. I think your comments are offensive.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question, official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, this is a very important issue, and I'd like to say it was out of keeping with the general behaviour of your government, but it's not. It's another question of acting first, thinking later and then trying to pick up the damage whether you're talking about hospitals or schools or in an effort to put on a kind and gentler face during the throne speech. You did so at the expense of identifying a young offender contrary to the law.

I want to come back to a question I asked earlier. What happened inside your office? How could this happen? Dozens of people must have pored over this throne speech. It must have been drafted and redrafted and revised over and over again. Many, many eyes would have looked at it. Did you or did you not obtain a legal opinion that would say it was okay for the Lieutenant Governor to provide that information in this House?

1400

Hon Mr Harris: I've already responded to that. Actually, the leader, as a lawyer and with whatever advice he has received, knows two things: He knows that we would want to do nothing to limit the investigation by the RCMP and, secondly, he knows his question is totally inappropriate.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, this is your throne speech. You are responsible for this. This is supposed to tell us what your government is all about and maybe what it wants to be and, in that effort, you ended up trampling on the rights of a citizen of Ontario. You broke the law.

Your Solicitor General has stepped down as a result of that. What you're trying to do here today is to say: "That's his baby. That's not my problem. The responsibility lies entirely with him." It's your throne speech. It's Mike Harris's throne speech.

How could this possibly have happened? After so much work, so much effort, so much energy and so much preparation went into the drafting of the throne speech, how could it happen that the Lieutenant Governor stood up and embarrassed herself in front of the province and identified a young offender contrary to the law? Premier, do you or do you not have any responsibility in this?

Hon Mr Harris: I accept none of the allegations as fact. That's why the RCMP are looking into this.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, you would think that if you are going to make reference to a young offender or a relation of a young offender in a throne speech, somebody somewhere along the way at some time would say: "We'd better have this checked out. We can't just put that information out there. We can't leave the Lieutenant Governor swinging in the wind. We have a responsibility to make sure that this is okay and that it's legal." Surely you got a legal opinion before you went ahead with this.

My question once again to you, Premier, is quite simply: Did you or did you not get a legal opinion before that throne speech was read in this House?

Hon Mr Harris: I can only repeat — and actually the member knows full well on the advice that he has, I'm sure — that I cannot comment. This is a matter now for the RCMP to investigate. The Solicitor General has done the honourable thing here today, and I think if you read his statement, it is not reflective of any of the things you've said today.

The Speaker: New question, third party, the leader of the third party.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): Premier, it is true the Solicitor General has done the honourable thing here today. He's done the proper thing. However, the speech from the throne is your speech. It's the speech that

you and your advisers authored. It is not the speech of the Solicitor General. In that speech it was very apparent last Thursday that there was what could be termed a breach of the criminal law of Canada. My question to you is: Since it is you and your advisers who wrote the speech, what responsibility do you take for that breach of the criminal law last Thursday?

Hon Mr Harris: I have accepted the resignation of the Solicitor General pending the investigation by the RCMP at your request.

Mr Hampton: We understand that the Solicitor General has taken some responsibility, but you're trying desperately to miss the question, Premier. It's your speech. It is a speech that you and your advisers write, not the Solicitor General, not the Minister of Health, not the Minister of Education. It's a speech that you and your advisers write.

I'm asking you again, Premier. You have to take responsibility here, you and your closest advisers. Your closest advisers would have approved that speech. What responsibility do you take for the apparent breach of the criminal law that happened here last Thursday? You, Premier, not the Solicitor General. It was your speech. What responsibility do you take?

Hon Mr Harris: I think you're well aware that the speech is the government's speech from the throne. You can be free in opposition to throw allegations around, if you like. But you have called upon the RCMP to determine whether there's any validity in those allegations and we have accepted that advice and therefore it's inappropriate for me to comment.

Mr Hampton: Premier, it is quite true that there is a legal element to this, but there's also an element of this that talks to the propriety of government, how properly your office operates, if your office is thoughtful about what happens, if your office is thoughtful in terms of observing not only the letter of the law but the spirit of the law. That's what I'm after, Premier.

We're also told that officials in the Ministry of the Solicitor General told your advisers it was their view that the name that was mentioned in the speech should not be mentioned because it could lead to the identification of the young offender, which would be a breach of the criminal law. We're told that officials in the Ministry of the Solicitor General advised your office. Can you tell us how your office responded to that advice, Premier? Can you tell us what responsibility you have taken?

Hon Mr Harris: I would suggest that we all reserve our comments for the RCMP.

The Speaker: New question, the leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: In the absence of answers from the Premier, I'd like to address my questions to the Attorney General. The Attorney General is supposed to be the chief law officer of the crown. Following the events of Thursday, I waited to hear from the chief law officer of the crown that he was calling an investigation into the events, into the apparent breach of the criminal law. Could you tell us, Mr Attorney General, in your role as the chief law

officer of the crown, in your role to protect the legal rights of citizens across this province, what you did following the events of Thursday afternoon?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Certainly in this situation it would be inappropriate for an elected official to be directing any law enforcement agencies. Certainly the information that might have led law enforcement agencies to take a look at this was in the public domain, and accordingly that was up to those officials.

Mr Hampton: The reason I have these questions for the Attorney General is because not many months ago, when the former Minister of Health, Mr Wilson, got into trouble because one of his staff members called someone in the media and said, "I have some inside information on a doctor's billings that you could use," your government was very quick to call for an independent investigation. Now, here there was an apparent breach in this Legislature before your very eyes. So I want to ask you, why would you not have called for an independent police investigation to get to the facts, to see who might be held responsible? Why, in your office, as the chief law officer of the crown, would you not have done that?

Hon Mr Harnick: It is not the role of elected officials, including myself, to investigate allegations of this kind. As a former Attorney General, the member knows it would be inappropriate for me to comment further in light of the investigation that may be ongoing.

1410

Mr Hampton: The answers of the Attorney General are somewhat confusing. Everyone in this Legislature saw this Attorney General about a year and a half ago come into this Legislature, call for a police investigation of a member of the Legislature and on top of that raise allegations against those members of the Legislature. I'm a bit confused by your response, Mr Attorney General. I saw you come into this Legislature. I've seen other situations where an independent police investigation has been launched and called for. You saw an apparent breach of the criminal law, the most serious law in this country, last Thursday and you did nothing.

Mr Attorney General, if you are not here to protect the rights of all the citizens of Ontario, then what are you doing in the office of the Attorney General?

Hon Mr Harnick: As I said before, it is not the role of elected officials, including myself, to investigate these kinds of matters. It would be inappropriate to make any further comments about this, as the matter has been referred to the police, apparently. It would be inappropriate to comment further.

The Speaker: New question, official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: I'll come back to the Premier on the same subject matter. Obviously the Solicitor General has his own understanding of this issue. You tell us that you don't want to talk about anything that will be the subject of the investigation.

I want to come back to the very statement that the Solicitor General made two moments ago in this House. I want to ask the same question that I asked you earlier: Did

the Solicitor General decide of his own accord today to stand up in this Legislature and say he was going to step down until the investigation was completed, or did you ask him to do that? That's a very important question, Premier. Did he do it of his own accord, or did you ask him to make that statement in this House today after you reviewed the facts?

Hon Mr Harris: I think Mr Runciman has made it very clear as Solicitor General what he requested of me.

Mr McGuinty: I'll tell you why I'm coming back to this, Premier, because outside this House a few moments ago the Solicitor General was heard to say, "It was not my decision." That opens the door, then, as to why he took that decision in this House today.

Premier, I'll give you the opportunity again, because it seems to me like he was pushed out, like you were making some kind of an effort to keep this away from you, Premier. If I'm wrong in that regard, then simply stand up and provide us with every assurance that the Solicitor General did this today completely of his own accord and that he must have been mistaken when he said, "It wasn't my decision."

Hon Mr Harris: The member would know that this has been a difficult day for the Solicitor General, Mr Runciman. For you to demean the situation he has presented before you, for you to try to take away from the honourable —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member for St Catharines, come to order. Member for Hamilton East, come to order. Member for Ottawa West, come to order, please.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I just want to take this time, if you could stop the clock momentarily, to introduce in the Speaker's gallery the member for Quinte from the last Parliament, Mr Hugh O'Neil. Welcome back.

New question, leader of the third party.

DISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question again for the Premier. I heard you a few minutes ago say, "We want to do nothing to impede the RCMP investigation." If that's the case, can you tell me why just a few moments ago I saw a printout of an electronic mail from one of your officials asking that all copies of the throne speech as it was originally printed be returned, coming from your officials, Premier? Can you tell me why you're suddenly trying to gather up all the original copies of the throne speech?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I don't know where you've been. There seems to be a little controversy about one aspect of the throne speech. I would assume they've received legal advice that, pending a review of all

that, it doesn't make a lot of sense to continue to circulate copies as they were originally written.

Mr Hampton: I didn't hear an answer to my question. If the Premier's office, the Premier and his officials, wanted the RCMP investigation to proceed in an unimpeded way, I would think you would want full disclosure of all the evidence, all the information. That means you would want easy access by the RCMP to original copies of the throne speech. That means your officials would not be circulating e-mails around the Legislature — urgent e-mails, I might add, because that's what the e-mail says: "Most urgent. Return all copies of the original throne speech ASAP." I would think you wouldn't be asking that.

Premier, I put the question to you again: If you want the RCMP investigation to proceed in an unimpeded way, why are your officials sending out urgent messages demanding that the original copies of the throne speech be returned to your office?

Hon Mr Harris: I honestly have to tell you, a former Attorney General, that I don't know if your question is serious or not. Let me assure you of this: The RCMP will have no difficulty accessing Hansard, and I'm sure my staff are appropriately responding to any requests they've been given, under legal advice.

FEDERAL TAXATION

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. Recently the federal government announced that oil being transported on Ontario's waterways should be taxed at a rate of \$1.36 per tonne. This money is being used to cover the cost of cleaning up an oil spill should one ever occur. No one questions the need to establish a financial fund to assist the authorities in cleaning up an oil spill. However, I'm concerned with the manner in which Ottawa is unfairly taxing the oil being shipped through Ontario. The risk of an oil spill occurring in Ontario's waterways is much lower than it is in other provinces; however, we are being taxed at a rate three or four times higher than that of other provinces. Minister, what is the government's position on this matter, and do you not see this federal initiative as unfairly taxing businesses and consumers in Ontario?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I'd like to thank the member for Halton North for the question. What we have here, again, is a made-in-Ottawa, Liberal solution. In fact, it's a universal Liberal solution: "Let's tax the people in Ontario some more." Here we have another tax on the economy of Ontario. The facts are these: Quebec, for example, ships 12 million tonnes; Ontario ships 2.2 million tonnes. The risk assessment made by the federal Liberal government is that the risk is in the St Lawrence. Therefore, what do they do? They tax the people in Ontario at four times the amount. This is going to translate down at the pumps.

I have to ask the Leader of the Opposition, did he pick up the phone and call his buddy Jean Chrétien up there in

Ottawa? I don't think he has. Who is going to stand up for the people of Ontario? Certainly not the Liberal MPs, and probably not the Liberal MPPs either. The Leader of the Opposition certainly has to talk to his buddies. That's another Liberal tax on the people of Ontario.

Mr Chudleigh: As the minister is aware, this matter gets worse. The federal government has also proposed, through the recovery of these fees, to make the payables retroactive to September 1995. September 1995 is when the Liberal government in Ottawa gave the licence to the consortiums of major oil companies to collect this fee. It will be extremely difficult for small independents which have received shipments since then to absorb this financial cost. Many gas retailers are going to be facing some difficult situations as a result of this tax, not to mention the possible negative impacts on consumers. Minister, have you communicated this concern with the federal government on this very important issue?

1420

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: The member is quite right. What we have here is a crisis being created by the federal government.

We have about 3,000 independent gas dealers in this province.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: They may not care about their own independent gas dealers; I think we do. They're small business. Quite frankly, these 3,000 small businesses in the province of Ontario are in danger of either going bankrupt or laying off people as a result of another Liberal tax. This retroactivity is what's really killing them, and that's another indication of the way Ottawa treats us in Ontario. We've got a \$2.1-billion cut in our federal health care and social transfers. And you know what they do? They keep on imposing more tax in terms of the payroll taxes, which we know are job killers here in this province.

I wrote to David Anderson, who's the minister in charge of this, back on March 6. Do you think he has responded to someone who's trying to speak up for the people of Ontario? Of course the answer is no.

All this is simply once again a made-in-Ottawa but a universal Liberal solution to everything: Tax people in Ontario unfairly.

DISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): Premier, back to the same issue that we've been discussing. We're talking about a throne speech here, a matter of fundamental importance of the direction your government is about to take. There was information in there that identified a young offender. I think, Premier, that surely in the circumstances you would have referred the throne speech to the Attorney General's office for it to be thoroughly vetted there. Can you provide us with the assurance now that that throne speech was in fact sent to the Attorney General's office for the Attorney General to review it?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I can assure you we'll cooperate with the RCMP in any investigation.

Mr McGuinty: That's just a simple yes or no, Premier. I would think that anybody who was looking at this issue would expect that a government, in delivering a throne speech, before doing so, would have taken all reasonable precautions to ensure that at a minimum they weren't about to break the law — at a minimum.

Tell me, Premier, once again: Did you or did you not send the throne speech over to the Attorney General for him to vet it to ensure that you weren't about to break the law?

Hon Mr Harris: I know the RCMP will probably want to look into that, but all the allegations that the member makes are just allegations that you're simply talking about. The issue and the specific question is one that I think is better responded to now with the RCMP.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question, leader of the third party.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): To the Attorney General again, I want to return to the questions I asked you last time. In your duties as the chief law officer of the crown, you heard and saw, as everyone else heard and saw here last Thursday, what was an apparent breach of the criminal law of Canada. That became evident to everyone once we left the chamber, because the media were certainly aware of it. In your duties as the chief law officer of the crown, didn't you think it was your responsibility to call for an independent police investigation? I would argue the RCMP would be the most independent in these circumstances to gather the evidence, to preserve the evidence. Wouldn't you think that would be your responsibility, and why didn't you do it?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): In the face of an alleged breach of the law, it would be most inappropriate for the Attorney General to comment.

Mr Hampton: Taking that answer from the Attorney General, let me read from Hansard of Thursday, November 7, 1996:

"Hon Charles Harnick: I rise to advise the Legislature of a potentially serious incident at the Downsview Family Responsibility Office that was brought to the attention of the Ministry of the Attorney General this morning" — "this morning," the very day. "The ministry has been advised that there may have been unauthorized access to files held by the Family Responsibility Office. The ministry has been advised of the following...." Then you invoked a police investigation.

What we witnessed here last Thursday can only be termed, on the face of it, to be a breach of the criminal law of Canada, yet you did nothing. I had to call for an independent RCMP investigation. You did nothing. How are you doing your duties, not as a member of the Harris cabinet but as —

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon Mr Harnick: Again, it would be most inappropriate in light of where this situation is today, with the allegations that have been made and the fact that appar-

ently there is a police investigation that may begin, to make any comment whatsoever.

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): My question is for the Minister of Labour.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Leader of the third party, come to order, please.

Mr Guzzo: Minister, 27% of all health care jobs in Ottawa-Carleton are held by Quebec residents. Some 62% of the licence plates on one shift at one hospital were found to be from the province of Quebec, but an Ontario nurse cannot even apply to the Gatineau hospital.

Quebec Hydro is stiffing Ontario electrical contractors who worked around the clock under a written agreement during the ice storm emergency. While American contractors have been paid in full, Ontario contractors were offered less than 50 cents on the dollar.

The 1996 agreement entered into with the province of Quebec is not being honoured by that province, as construction workers pile over the border in Ottawa-Carleton every day.

I'm asking you, Minister, in your new responsibilities, what are you personally prepared to do about this situation?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Labour): I thank the honourable member for Ottawa-Rideau for the question. The issue raised is a priority for this government, and that is the maintenance of open borders that give Ontario and Quebec workers and contractors equal access to work in the construction market.

The 1996 Ontario-Quebec agreement on construction labour mobility was an important step forward in promoting mobility in the construction sector between Quebec and Ontario, but we continue to hear stories like the ones mentioned by the honourable member that indicate that a level playing field does not exist between Ontario and Quebec, particularly in the Ottawa area, and that Quebec may not be implementing the agreement as it stands.

Free trade and unrestricted labour mobility are vital to economic growth and job creation in Ontario. I am here to promote the interests of Ontario workers and contractors, to ensure that a level playing field exists.

Mr Guzzo: Minister, I want to tell you that 25 years ago I came to Queen's Park as a representative of the RMOC council, and I believe the member for Ottawa East was with me. He was then the mayor of Vanier —

Interjection.

Mr Guzzo: No, the mayor of Eastview, before he changed the name. That's right.

Twenty-five years is a long time. I admit that the 1996 and NDP agreements were a step in the right direction, but this situation cannot continue. I am asking you if you're prepared to come to eastern Ontario and learn first hand of the reasons why my constituents — and Mr Grandmaître's constituents, I might tell you — are losing their jobs and

losing their homes as a result of the failure of the Quebec government to honour that agreement.

Hon Mr Flaherty: I'm pleased to accept the invitation of the honourable member for Ottawa-Rideau to travel to eastern Ontario and to hear first hand the concerns of those who work in eastern Ontario relative to the Ontario-Quebec labour mobility situation.

The first thing I want to do is hear from the people in eastern Ontario directly. I ask the member for Ottawa-Rideau to help, and I'm sure he will, in arranging that. I plan to speak to people who work in the construction sector first, because that's where we've been hearing first hand about major difficulties, about how best to address the issue and resolve the matter, to make sure that a level playing field exists and that the Ontario-Quebec accord is being implemented by both sides and not just the province of Ontario. I would hope to have the support of both the opposition critics in this effort, in particular the Liberal Party critic, the honourable member for Ottawa Centre.

1430

DISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): Premier, as I was saying earlier, a few moments ago, your Solicitor General in a hallway of this building said, "It wasn't my decision." Last week, when he was first asked about this, he said, "I had a legal opinion that as long as she signed a waiver, it could be done." He also said, "The mother signed a waiver and we had a legal opinion that that was the appropriate thing to do and was quite legally okay." My question, Premier, is, who provided your Solicitor General with those opinions? Did that come from your office or did that come from the Attorney General's office?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Two things by way of responding to the preamble: The leader of the Liberal Party continues, in my view most inappropriately and I think beneath the dignity of any member of this House, to challenge the statement that was made by the Solicitor General in this House. I can assure you that the first and only comment and contact I had with the Solicitor General was to accept his resignation, as he indicated right here. To suggest otherwise is most inappropriate and I find it rather offensive. Secondly, the matter is under investigation and we will comply with the RCMP in making sure we get all the facts out.

Mr McGuinty: I'm not suggesting anything, Premier. I'm simply relating the facts. A few moments ago the Solicitor General stood up and said he was going to step down pending the outcome of an investigation. A few moments after that, outside this chamber, in the hall, he said — and I'll get it again — "It wasn't my decision." That's what your Solicitor General said. I'm not suggesting anything. I am relating the facts here.

Premier, I understand that earlier today you had a meeting with the Solicitor General. I'm not talking now

about the events leading up to the disclosure of the identifying information in this House. I'm talking about the meeting you had a few hours ago with the Solicitor General. I want you to tell us, what did you discuss at that time and, in particular, what led to his resignation here in this House?

Hon Mr Harris: The minister has made the statement. I don't know what question you're talking about the minister responding to. The first contact I had with the minister today was in a personal meeting to accept his offer of a resignation. I can assure you those were the first words I heard from the Solicitor General today. That's what he said in the House and I find it offensive that you continue to challenge that.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question, leader of the third party.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): Premier, a number of pieces of information have come to light here this afternoon. I'm going to ask you, so that we can get to the bottom of this, would you be kind enough to provide us with a written copy of the e-mail that is making the rounds of the legislative precinct asking for all copies of the throne speech to be returned? Would you do that? Would you also provide us with any advice your ministry received from the Ministry of the Solicitor General advising that the name in question not be put into the throne speech because it might lead to the identification of a young offender? Would you provide us all with copies of those things? Providing us with copies does not deny the RCMP the copies. They can get copies as well. But so we can all understand this, would you provide us all with copies of those things?

Hon Mr Harris: You know more about e-mail than I do. You're talking about an e-mail of which I have no knowledge. I can help you access e-mail, if you like. If you say it's on the e-mail, you must have seen it, so you must know what's there. We'll provide whatever is appropriate to the RCMP, as we've indicated.

Mr Hampton: I'm encouraged that the Premier will provide them to the RCMP, but, Premier, this is not just about the narrow legal issue. It is also about the way in which your government operates, the way in which your government continues to breach the pay equity law and get caught, to breach the Crown Forest Sustainability Act and get caught, to breach the Environmental Assessment Act and get caught, to try to interfere with the Ontario Labour Relations Act and the Ontario Labour Relations Board and get caught.

What we want here, Premier, is for you to provide us with the information that is now part of the public domain. So I am asking you for a written copy of the e-mail, I am asking you for a copy of the advice that came from officials in the Ministry of the Solicitor General, and I will add a third thing: Would you provide us with any legal opinion or a parent waiver that your government originally referred to? Why not produce those for the public record, Premier? What do you have to hide?

Hon Mr Harris: I think I've answered most of the questions. I also appreciate the assistance the member is

trying to bring to this whole matter today and the class with which he does it.

WOMEN IN SCIENCE

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question, the member for —

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): Huron.

The Speaker: Huron.

Mrs Johns: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I can't believe you forgot Huron, the most wonderful part in Ontario.

My question is for the minister responsible for women's issues. Minister, if there is one thing that is becoming increasingly apparent in today's society, it is the need for our students to have a strong background in science, math and computer science.

I noted with interest a reference in the throne speech to an organization called the Canadian Association of Girls in Science. Would you be able to provide me with more information on this organization?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): I think we are all aware in this House that there was a young group of girls represented here from London, Ontario, the Canadian Association for Girls in Science. We call it in London "Let's Talk Science."

I think if all of us are concerned about equality in the economy, we should know that women are underrepresented in our elementary school courses, our secondary school courses, and actually in our university courses in science.

According to a Toronto Star article which I think all of us should remember and take back to our own families and the young people in our communities, for the first time ever, women in their twenties are graduating at a greater rate and have more post-secondary university degrees.

Interjection.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: I look at the former Minister of Colleges and Universities. Thank you very much for your leadership. But the point is, they're not getting the great jobs.

So thank you for the question. I think it's a great group.

Mrs Johns: Could the minister please provide me with more information on contacting this group? I met with a group of women from a local high school in Huron county that had a remarkable computer program where they were interfacing with businesses. I am sure that some of these young women I met would like to contact this organization and become involved. It sounds like an organization we should all support, and we need to ensure women have every opportunity to become economically independent.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: The young woman who started this group when she was just a 10-year-old is Larissa Vingilis-Jaremko, from London, Ontario. She herself, along with these young women, has started a Web site for the Canadian Association of Girls in Science, who now are not only in London, Ontario, but are also in British Columbia and Alberta. The Web site number is www.uwo.ca/letstalkscience/cagis.html.

I think for the young people who are watching the Legislative Assembly this afternoon, they will get some positive advice in this regard, because all of us, including the Minister of Education, who should be very proud of his new elementary school science curriculum, know we have to do everything we can to take down those barriers and to open the doors.

My colleague from Huron knows, through her association with her own schools and the fact that she mentioned computer science, that that is a special place we want more women to enter so that they can be competitive and certainly independent in the world of work.

1440

DISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): Premier, one of the things the Solicitor General said last week when he was scrummed was that PC members' services had sent a camera crew over to the boot camp to film a graduation ceremony.

Is that true, Premier? Did staff working for your caucus go to this boot camp with a camera and film the graduating ceremonies fully knowing of the dangers connected with breaking the law that says you can't identify a young offender? Could that possibly have happened, Premier? Is that true?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I don't know, but we're happy to make that information available to the RCMP.

Mr McGuinty: We're getting all kinds of statements from you on the one hand and from your Solicitor General on the other. He said, before you cut him loose here today, that PC members' services had sent in a camera crew to film the graduating ceremonies at a boot camp. That's what your Solicitor General said. He said he got a legal opinion that said it was okay to disclose this information. He said that he was given, by somebody, a waiver so that it was okay to disclose this information. That's what your Solicitor General was telling us.

Then we find today he stands up and he says, "I'm gone and I've agreed to take the heat with me."

Premier, did PC members' services send a camera crew out to film a boot camp graduating ceremony?

Hon Mr Harris: I said I don't know. But thanks for the advice. I'll pass it on.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question, leader of the third party.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): A question to the Premier: The speech that was given on Thursday was the speech of you and your government. It was a speech that had been worked over and put together by your advisers.

When I requested an independent RCMP investigation I requested an investigation of your office and the Solicitor General. Now, the Solicitor General has done the proper thing here today. He has stepped down, he has resigned.

Premier, since it was your speech, put together by your advisers, and it's proper for the Solicitor General to step down pending an investigation, can you tell us why you yourself are not also stepping down at this time?

Hon Mr Harris: I thank the member for the advice. I don't believe the status quo as it exists today following the resignation of the Solicitor General will impede any investigation.

Mr Hampton: This has got nothing to do at this juncture with impeding an RCMP investigation. What we've seen here is that the Solicitor General has taken responsibility, has done the proper thing in the sense that he may be responsible.

But I come back to the point: This is your throne speech, put together by your advisers. We are told that officials in the Ministry of the Solicitor General advised your office: "Take the name out of the speech. It may lead to a breach of the criminal law by identifying the young offender."

Since it was proper for the Solicitor General to step down, Premier, I ask you, what responsibility are you taking? If it's proper for him to step down, why isn't it proper for you to step down?

Hon Mr Harris: I accept advice and I think the government, through the Solicitor General, has taken the appropriate steps today. If you're hearing other things and other advice, I'll pass it on to the RCMP.

MILLENNIUM CELEBRATIONS

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. Minister, the year 2000 is fast approaching and many residents of the province are hearing about computer viruses and other potential problems.

The constituents in the riding of Peterborough would like to ready themselves to celebrate and commemorate the millennium. Can you tell me what this government is doing to help Ontarians prepare to celebrate the millennium?

Hon Isabel Bassett (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): First of all, I thank you for your question, because this government is very interested in responding to all the calls we are getting from right across Ontario from communities, cities and towns that are interested in coming up with something that's meaningful, inclusive and fiscally responsible to celebrate the millennium. We are looking at how best we can do that and we have a small team in my ministry which is engineering that right now and responding to what people are asking.

Mr Stewart: Minister, you mentioned that you had a small team preparing. Could you tell me who may be heading up that unit?

Hon Ms Bassett: It's a small team of people, who are appointed, who are reporting to me. It's interesting, because they have been running focus groups as an aid to me to find out what people want and it's there that we are hearing that inclusiveness is a big issue, and volunteerism. For example, in Peterborough, your riding, it's interesting

that the winter games, which I attended and which were hugely successful, fiscally responsible and meaningful to hundreds and hundreds of volunteers there, are the kind of thing that we are hearing people want to put on right across the province. Maybe Peterborough will come up with new plans for the millennium now that they've gotten through the winter games.

DISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): Premier, back to this issue of the investigation. We're having some concerns about the terms of reference with respect to that investigation, your understanding of what they might be, and also how and when they are going to be made public. Many people now have developed an abiding interest in this issue, since it tells us much about the handling of your affairs within government, tells us much about what has happened in the past and what is about to happen in the future. There's a tremendous amount of interest in this issue. What is your understanding of the terms of reference for this investigation and when will the results be made public?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): There are no terms of reference; I don't have an understanding. A complaint was made to the police and I don't presume to pretend to tell them what their terms of reference are.

Mr McGuinty: Last week, Premier, you said that you would investigate. That's what you said. I'm not talking about the police investigation now; I'm just talking about your investigation. I want to know, have you done that investigation, and what were the results of that investigation?

Hon Mr Harris: I think now that the police are investigating, you would agree with me, and the advice I've been given is, that it's really not appropriate for me to comment.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question, leader of the third party.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): A question to the Attorney General: We understand that your government sent out electronic mail information pieces asking that all the copies of the throne speech be sent back. We understand that there was advice given by officials in the Ministry of the Solicitor General saying, "Don't use this name; it may lead to the identification of a person, of the young offender, which would be a breach of the criminal law."

You've acted very quickly in the past. I want to read again from the Hansard of November 7. You said: "We have taken the following steps. The Metropolitan Toronto Police have been contacted and are conducting a criminal investigation into the allegations" — allegations that you stood in this Legislature and raised.

I want to ask you again: It's apparent on the face of the record that there was very likely a breach of the criminal law of Canada here last Thursday. What did you do following that, Mr Attorney General? What did you do?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): In light of the fact that there has been a complaint apparently made to police and the police are apparently investigating, it would be inappropriate to discuss this further.

Mr Hampton: I want to be very clear. I'm trying to hold the chief law officer of the crown accountable. The chief law officer of the crown in Ontario has some legal duties and responsibilities. He didn't do them last Thursday; I had to do them for him. In the past, you've been very quick in this Legislature to get on your feet to make allegations and then to call for an independent police investigation regarding alleged criminal behaviour.

I'm trying to get at this now. I'm trying to ask you, Mr Attorney General: In this Legislature last Thursday there was an apparent breach of the criminal law of Canada that was obvious to everyone. You have a duty, as the chief law officer of the crown, to ensure that those things don't happen and, if they do happen, to ask the police to investigate. Why didn't you ask the police to investigate? Why didn't you do that? It's part of your job.

Hon Mr Harnick: I have no new answer. Quite simply, because there has been this apparent complaint to the police, it would be inappropriate for me to comment.

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YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): My question is to the Minister of Education. We all know how hot the Ontario economy is, with 341,000 net new jobs in the private sector, and this is indeed good news. My three children have just finished their university sessions and are home; in fact, we picked them up this weekend. They were going over with me, looking in the paper and wondering what kind of job they'll have for the summer. I know last year we had an excellent program. My children didn't take advantage of it, but they did find jobs. Could you share with the House today what you're doing to help our children and their future in finding jobs in meaningful employment this summer?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): The member is correct that the economy has been doing extremely well, and I'm very pleased to say that since February of this year, just a few months ago, there have been almost 40,000 new jobs for the young people of Ontario. I will also say that the member is correct in that last year the summer program to assist our youth finding jobs was extremely successful. We hoped to help about 40,000 kids find jobs in the summer and we exceeded that by 7,000 and actually assisted 47,000 young people. This year we have allocated about \$50 million to help about 50,000 young people, 48,500 to be exact, to find jobs by helping them job-search through a subsidy program, through business startup loans and through jobs within the government.

Mr O'Toole: That's indeed an excellent response, and I'm sure the students watching today who are home from

university will take your advisement, and I'm sure there will be jobs. The economy is growing.

Would you share with me how students can directly link up. Is there a Web site? For instance, I can tell you that in Durham we're having a workshop this month for students in Bowmanville, and we're working with Manpower and we're also working with youth groups to bring to their attention the importance of safety in the workplace. I've told some of the constituents to sign on to the Web site, www.gov.on.ca, and they can find information on jobs in the directories. Could you tell me what other information is forthcoming from the government?

Hon David Johnson: The member has given the Web site and I would encourage the young people of Ontario to contact the Web site and get assistance. I would encourage the employers in the province — summer is coming — to start thinking about the young people in Ontario.

The summer jobs are really important to the young people. They need them for a little extra money. They need them for money to assist them in their education as they go back to school. The province will be putting in about \$50 million to help those young people through job search opportunities, through summer employment opportunities within the provincial government, through subsidies, a \$2 subsidy to employers within Ontario. Let's all get together, the private sector and the kids, and create jobs for our young people. I think this is an excellent program we have this year.

DISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): Premier, I would think that it is for most people very, very difficult to believe that nobody at some point along the way approached you or someone in your office and said, "We are about to take a huge risk if we send the Lieutenant Governor into the chamber and have her read this throne speech as it is," or are you telling me that this came as a complete surprise and that nobody in the Attorney General's office, nobody in the Solicitor General's office and nobody in your office caught on to this and happened to know that there is a law on the books that accords some basic rights to young offenders in Ontario? Are you telling me that this came as a complete and absolute shock to you when the media questioned you about this subsequent to the throne speech being read in this House, or did somebody along the way say, "Premier, we've got a problem here, and if she goes ahead and reads that thing in the House, we're taking a big risk"?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Thanks for your advice. I'll pass it on.

Mr McGuinty: This is not a complicated issue, Premier. I'm simply asking on behalf of the Ontario public how this could have happened. There is a law on the books. As lawmakers we're deemed to know what it is. It says you can't disclose information that would identify a young offender. Your government is responsible for young offenders in Ontario.

Some information came from somewhere relating to this young offender. It somehow went before the Attorney General and he didn't pick it up. It went before the Solicitor General and apparently he didn't pick it up either. Then you, Premier, with all those people working on your behalf in your office, failed to pick it up as well. Then the Lieutenant Governor stood up in this Legislature and disclosed that information. Again, on behalf of the people of this province, how could that happen?

Hon Mr Harris: I think the Solicitor General's statement is pretty clear and straightforward. The member also knows it has been asked that this matter be looked into by the RCMP and it is inappropriate for me to comment.

I might say this: The member opposite has made a number of allegations today, including one about Mr Runciman's truth, I would say, in the statement he made in the House. Mr Runciman was asked outside, "What about a return to cabinet?" Mr Runciman's answer was, "It's not my decision." I would think the member opposite would want to correct the record on one of the most embarrassing things he has said in the House today.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Point of order?

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): Mr Speaker, I have a point of order, and I think we need to know this. The Solicitor General has resigned. We understand that the Premier's office may be under investigation. We don't know who now is in effect the chief of police for Ontario, who the police would report to after having completed an investigation. I think we need to know who is in effect the Solicitor General. Who do the police now report to in Ontario?

The Speaker: It's not for me to know, leader of the third party. I assume the government will carry on and make the announcement at a future date.

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): On a point of personal privilege, Mr Speaker: Since I'm getting requests for the throne speech in my office, am I now in violation of the Young Offenders Act should I send those copies of the throne speech?

The Speaker: Member for Kenora, I can't answer that for you and I certainly don't want to answer that for you. That's a decision you're going to have to make yourself.

PETITIONS

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr Gilles E. Morin (Carleton Place): I have a petition signed by 620 of my constituents. It's addressed to the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the 43-year-old relic that was condemned in 1983 and has housed Nouveaux-Horizons for six years was deemed a temporary facility;

"Whereas the location of this relic greatly compromises the safety of our children on a daily basis;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To free up funding for the construction of a new French Catholic school in the Chapel Hill area of Gloucester."

I will sign my signature to this petition.

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads:

"Whereas nurses in Ontario often experience coercion to participate in practices which directly contravene their deeply held ethical standards;

"Whereas pharmacists in Ontario are often pressured to dispense and/or sell chemicals and/or devices contrary to their moral or religious beliefs;

"Whereas public health workers in Ontario are expected to assist in providing controversial services and promoting controversial materials against their consciences;

"Whereas physicians in Ontario often experience pressure to give referrals for medications, treatments and/or procedures which they believe to be gravely immoral;

"Whereas competent health care workers and students in various health care disciplines in Ontario have been denied training, employment, continued employment and advancement in their intended fields and suffered other forms of unjust discrimination because of the dictates of their consciences; and

"Whereas the health care workers experiencing such unjust discrimination have at present no practical and accessible legal means to protect themselves;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers, prohibiting coercion and unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary to the dictates of their consciences and establishing penalties for such coercion and unjust discrimination."

1500

SLOW-MOVING VEHICLES

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): I have a petition of 165 pages and 3,775 signatures. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"In an effort to work together to protect the ones we love and prevent further tragedies, we, the family and friends of Cheryl Herteis, request the Ministry of Transportation to bring forward regulations which would incorporate tape or some form of reflective device to be placed along the sides of all horse-drawn vehicles used in our province, along all roadways, be they major thoroughfares or country roads, to ensure adequate visualization of

buggies crossing roadways in order to protect both the occupants of the buggies and those in motor vehicles.

"We bring this request to the government of Ontario so that something positive can come from the tragic deaths of Cheryl Herteis and Aaron and Muriel Kueper."

ROAD SAFETY

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): This petition is on red-light cameras.

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas red-light cameras can dramatically assist in reducing the number of injuries and deaths resulting from red-light runners; and

"Whereas red-light cameras only take pictures of licence plates, thus reducing privacy concerns; and

"Whereas all revenues from violations can be easily directed to a designated fund to improve safety at high-collision intersections; and

"Whereas there is a growing disregard for traffic laws resulting in serious injury to pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and especially children and seniors; and

"Whereas the provincial government has endorsed the use of a similar camera system to collect tolls on the new 407 tollway; and

"Whereas mayors and concerned citizens across Ontario have been seeking permission to deploy these cameras due to limited police resources;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario support the installation of red-light cameras at high-collision intersections to monitor and prosecute motorists who run red lights."

I affix my name to this petition.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a petition signed by 133 residents of Ontario, addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas many questions concerning the events preceding, during and after the fatal shooting of Anthony Dudley George on September 6, 1995, at Ipperwash Provincial Park, where over 200 armed officers were sent to control 25 unarmed men and women, have not been answered;

"Whereas the officers involved in the beating of Bernard George were not held responsible for their actions;

"Whereas the Ontario Provincial Police refused to co-operate with the special investigations unit in recording the details of that night;

"Whereas the influence and communications of Lambton MPP Marcel Beaubien with the government have been verified through transcripts presented in the Legislature;

"Whereas the trust of the portfolio of native affairs held by the Attorney General, Charles Harnick, is compromised by his continued refusal for a full public inquiry into the events of Ipperwash;

"Whereas the promised return of Camp Ipperwash to the Stoney Point nation by the federal ministry of defence and the serious negotiations of land claims by both the provincial and federal governments could have avoided a conflict;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for a full public inquiry to be held into the events surrounding the fatal shooting of Dudley George on September 6, 1995, to eliminate all misconceptions held by and about the government, the OPP and the Stoney Point people."

I affix my name to that petition.

ABORTION

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of 25 million taxpayer dollars;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

I affix my signature.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): I've had a petition directed my way. It's a petition to upgrade the Kejick Bay access road. It reads:

"We, the undersigned, hereby request and demand that you, as our member of Parliament, speak out on our behalf to Ministry of Transportation officials to have the Kejick Bay access road upgraded and resurfaced. Let's not wait until someone gets severely injured or dies before we take action."

That's signed by hundreds of constituents from Lac Seul, Kejick Bay, Frenchmans Head, Kenora and a number of other places and I too attach my name to that most important petition.

AVORTEMENTS

M^{lle} Shelley Martel (Sudbury-Est) : J'ai ici une pétition signée par des centaines de personnes qui habitent dans la circonscription de Sudbury-Est et elle dit :

«Pétition à l'attention de l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

«Puisque les contribuables de l'Ontario ont financé environ 45 000 avortements en 1993 à un coût de l'ordre de 25 \$ millions ;

«Entendu que la grossesse n'est pas une maladie ni une blessure, et que les avortements ne constituent pas des procédures thérapeutiques ;

«Entendu que la vaste majorité des avortements se font pour des raisons de commodité ou financières ;

«Entendu que la province a l'autorité exclusive de déterminer quels services seront assurés ;

«Entendu que la Loi canadienne sur la santé n'exige pas que les procédures électives soient financées ;

«Entendu qu'il y a de plus en plus de preuves que l'avortement pose un risque à la santé des femmes ;

«Par conséquent nous, les soussignés, demandons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario de cesser d'utiliser l'argent des contribuables pour financer les avortements.

ABORTION

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

STANDING ORDERS REFORM

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition which arises out of a bill that the Premier introduced the last day. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the people of Ontario want rigorous discussion on legislation dealing with public policy issues like health care, education and care for seniors; and

"Whereas many people in Ontario believe that the Mike Harris government is moving too quickly and recklessly, creating havoc with the provision of quality health care and quality education; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has passed new legislative rules which have eroded the ability of both the public and the media to closely scrutinize the actions of the Ontario government; and

"Whereas Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, when they were in opposition, defended the rights of the opposition and used the rules to full advantage when they believed it was necessary to slow down the passage of controversial legislation; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has now reduced the amount of time that MPPs will have to debate the important issues of the day; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government, through its rule changes, has diminished the role of elected members of the Legislative Assembly who are accountable to the people who elect them, and instead has chosen to concentrate power in the Premier's office in the hands of people who are not elected officials;

"We, the undersigned, call upon Mike Harris to withdraw his draconian rule changes and restore rules which promote rigorous debate on contentious issues and hold the government accountable to the people of Ontario."

I'm willing to affix my signature to this petition, as I'm in full agreement with its contents.

1510

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition forwarded to me by Wayne Samuelson, president of the Ontario Federation of Labour, on behalf of their 600,000 members.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas each year in Ontario approximately 300 workers are killed on the job, several thousand die of occupational diseases and 400,000 suffer work-related injuries and illnesses; and

"Whereas during the past decade the Workers' Health and Safety Centre proved to be the most cost-effective WCB-funded prevention organization dedicated to worker health and safety concerns; and

"Whereas the WCB provides over 80% of its legislated prevention funding to several employer-controlled safety associations and less than 20% to the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre recently lost several million dollars in funding and course revenue due to government changes to legislated training requirements; and

"Whereas 30% of Workers' Health and Safety Centre staff were laid off due to these lost training funds; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre now faces an additional 25% cut to its 1998 budget, which will be used to augment new funding for employer safety associations in the health, education and services sector; and

"Whereas the WCB's 1998 plan to baseline budget cuts for safety associations and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre will be disproportionately against the workers' centre and reduce its 1998 budget allocation to less than 15% of the WCB prevention funding,

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the WCB's proposed cuts and direct the WCB to increase the Workers' Health and

Safety Centre's funding to at least 50% of the WCB's legislated prevention funding; and

"Further we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the WCB to significantly increase its legislated prevention funding in order to eliminate workplace illness, injury and death."

On the eve of the day of mourning, I proudly sign this petition on behalf of all my NDP colleagues.

ABORTION

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I have a petition today signed by 34 residents of Ontario. The petition is calling for the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease providing taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions. I'd like to file that today.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a petition for long-term-care beds in Elliot Lake. It is similar to a petition signed by 6,000 residents of the city of Elliot Lake. It says that there are no long-term beds in this city, which has attracted thousands of seniors from across Ontario. Elliot Lake is the only municipality with a population in excess of 10,000 people in Ontario without a long-term-care facility nearby. Already families have been divided as one ailing senior is shipped off 115 kilometres away to the closest facility. Couples who fear for their coming years are moving out, often south, to centres with more assurance of long-term care. Most of them love living in Elliot Lake and are sorry to leave, and the city is sorry to lose them.

"Therefore we, the citizens of Elliot Lake, request the government of Ontario, through the intervention of the Premier and Minister of Health, to relieve the current anxiety in this community and provide 120 long-term-care beds." That's nursing-home beds.

I'll affix my signature, as I'm in full support.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Consideration of the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph): I move, seconded by Mr O'Toole, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To the Honourable Hilary M. Weston, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has addressed to us.

Mr Speaker, before I begin I would just like to indicate that I'll be sharing my time for remarks with the member for Durham East.

On behalf of the members I represent in the riding of Guelph, it is my privilege and it is my honour to move today the adoption of the second speech from the throne from the government led by Premier Mike Harris.

This throne speech celebrates the beginning of the second session of the 36th Parliament. Right now our government is in the midst of revitalizing Ontario. Our government is in the midst of completing and honouring its election promises to voters, rebuilding a province that was in trouble, a province that was suffering from a decade of job-killing tax increases and from labour laws that frightened employment away.

We are in the midst of rebuilding a province that was crippled by former governments who mistakenly believed that people in Guelph and every other community across Ontario had bottomless pockets, bottomless pockets that they thought could pay down debts created by governments that couldn't set priorities or live within their means.

Ontario's debt doubled from \$45 billion to \$89 billion between 1990 and 1995, forcing billions to be wasted on interest payments. Those dollars were needed for health care, for education and social programs. The wishes of ordinary people of Ontario were not being heard. That is why, when the Progressive Conservative Party sought the advice of Ontarians, reflected their priorities and promised to enact their wishes, even recorded our plans in the Common Sense Revolution, our party was elected.

The people of Ontario told us to turn this province around. Our strategies were to balance the budget, to cut taxes, to create jobs, to reduce wasteful spending, to do better for less and to get rid of barriers to growth. Voters asked our party to fix Ontario because they knew governments cannot do everything for everybody all the time. They knew it was fiscally impossible and that it was that kind of thinking that had created the crushing provincial debt we now shoulder of \$106 billion.

Since being elected in June 1995, this government has been busy. We have worked hard to establish priorities and set policies to rebuild this province. We have worked hard to make it strong and vibrant once again and to instil pride and give hope for our future.

In preparing for today, I took the time to review this government's first throne speech from 1995. Let's review what we promised to undertake back then.

We promised that we would create jobs by reducing payroll taxes and eliminating the employer health tax. We promised that we would begin a review of red tape. We promised that we would restore democracy to the workplace and establish new labour laws after repealing the former laws that weren't working. We promised that we would protect family farms and repeal the old Bill 90. We promised that we would reform the Workers' Compensation Board and reduce rates.

1520

We promised to get spending under control and reduce the deficit that was then at \$11.3 billion. We promised to undertake municipal reform. We promised to review all agencies, boards and commissions for the province of Ontario. We promised to reduce the number of politicians and end gold-plated pensions and tax-free allowances.

We promised to introduce a Victims' Bill of Rights, to reinvest in health care, to increase dialysis treatment. We promised to increase immunization programs for our children, to reduce welfare rates, to introduce workfare for the first time in Ontario. We promised to rescind legislated job quotas, to improve the substitute decision legislation, and in education, we promised that we would reduce administration, improve curriculum and add standardized tests and report cards.

I am proud to stand before you today and say that on every single one of those intended actions that we promised to undertake we have completed and finished all of them. This government did exactly what it promised to do. I will tell you that it has not been easy, but it was certainly necessary.

Back home in my constituency of Guelph, some constituents have confided in me that perhaps our government was doing too much, that the pace of change was too much, too fast. Well, I have to ask, is there ever an easy way to undertake major change? I think that undertaking major change is a lot like taking off a Band-Aid. There are those among us who prefer to take it off very slowly; others like to yank it off quickly. I can tell you that the former governments had tried very hard to cover up Ontario's problems with several Band-Aid solutions. This government knew that in order to properly heal the province of Ontario and set it back on the track to prosperity, all those Band-Aids had to be removed.

But be assured, we have heard the concerns about needing to take more time and we are listening carefully. Just as we were listening closely to the advice from Ontarians about how to turn around this province, so too are we listening closely on advice on how now to proceed, to proceed with care.

Now we are moving into a new phase of our mandate. The major changes are enacted. It is time to adjust, to fine-tune and to plan for the future.

This government will continue to create the climate for jobs, for investors to seek out Ontario and for employers to hire workers. We will encourage opportunities, opportunities for employers like Denso. Denso is a Japanese manufacturing firm that recently chose Guelph and Ontario as the location for their first plant in Canada. We will offer opportunities for Guelph entrepreneurs like Jean Lane. Jean is opening her first business, her own business, Mail Boxes etc, and realizing a lifelong ambition of being an independent businesswoman. We are happy about opportunities for entrepreneurs like Andrew Beresford and Alex Beath, who have just founded Artemis Technologies and have already hired five people to develop and manufacture rabies vaccine in Guelph. Confidence that they see in Ontario's economy has prompted Bird Packaging, a

manufacturing firm that has operated in Guelph for 23 years, to expand and build a second facility in London, Ontario.

Our government will complete its promised income tax rate cut of 30%. Already, 30 taxes have been reduced or eliminated. For communities across Ontario, this means an investment of \$3.4 billion into our local economies. The income tax rate cuts to date mean that a family of four, both parents working and earning about \$60,000 per year, will keep about \$1,030 more of their hard-earned income. It means a senior earning about \$20,000 a year on old age security and pension will save \$200 a year. When fully implemented, our tax cuts will mean that 650,000 Ontario low-income earners will pay absolutely no taxes at all. Lower taxes benefit everyone.

Confidence is returning to Ontario. Over two thirds of all the jobs created in Canada are happening right here in Ontario — 341,000 net new private sector jobs since September 1995.

My town of Guelph is thriving. Our city's unemployment rate right now is 7.5%, well below the Ontario average of 8.2%, which in turn is well below the national average of 9.4%.

These job-creating tax cuts will continue because the pledge of our government to the people of Ontario is to encourage economic growth so that all Ontarians can benefit from increased opportunity.

Supporting Ontario workers and employers is important to this government. Finding ways to help address the shortage of highly skilled workers will help employers like Nick Galovich at Blount and Bob Ireland at Guelph Tool and Die, who are very concerned not only about the future of their own businesses but that the future competitiveness of Ontario will be compromised without the key skilled workers they require.

The city of Guelph has a very bright future in agrifood, biotech and food science technology and research. Dr Larry Milligan and Dr Murray McLaughlin are working hard to develop economic and research partnerships, building a cluster of activity that will thrive on the research expertise and investments already established in Guelph. Right now OMAFRA is there, Agriculture Canada is there, the University of Guelph is a strong leader, and private sector companies like Novartis, which has recently moved its head office to Guelph, are recognizing the opportunities and the networking possibilities available.

The kinds of jobs that will be created in this field require a highly skilled workforce. Your government is committed to achieving the goal of ensuring excellence in Ontario's education system. To reach their potential, each and every one of our children deserves the best instruction. More dollars will be spent in the classrooms of Ontario. Standardized testing will continue to be introduced. A more rigorous curriculum and clearer report cards will be implemented.

This government knows that one of the most important services a government can offer its citizens is an excellent

education. The students and the teachers of this province will be supported in their learning and in their teaching.

One of our strongest assets are the parents, and increased parental involvement through parent councils will continue to be encouraged.

We are also welcoming and are actually excited about the assistance of partners like the Canadian Federation of University Women. I noticed that today in question period we had a question about a science program for young girls. The Canadian Federation of University Women sponsors a science program called Scientists in School. This program was actually begun by the Ajax-Pickering chapter. In this program, people with science and technical expertise visit classrooms to teach and spark critical scientific thinking through a hands-on approach.

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The government has already demonstrated its commitment to early childhood education. Over \$20 million has been earmarked for early speech and language programs.

I have been visited by many parents in Guelph and Wellington county who are concerned about the lack of programs in our area. I can tell you that many of them are thrilled to see \$215,000 invested in Guelph, Wellington and Dufferin for much-needed programs to help their children.

Our first minister responsible for children, the Honourable Margaret Marland, has been diligent in seeking advice from MPPs and experts in learning like Dr Fraser Mustard and the Honourable Margaret McCain on how to best prepare our children for school.

As I mentioned earlier, over 341,000 net new private sector jobs have been created. Welfare assistance will be available for those in temporary need of help.

But there is a motto that comes from our area that I believe describes the work ethic of the people who built this great province. It goes like this: "By work and by worth we rise."

The role of government is to help people off social assistance and into the workforce so that each and every person, by work and by worth, can rise. We will continue to provide assistance for job searches, to increase the number of community placement services, to crack down on abuse and expand mandatory work for welfare. We will move to require that where child care subsidies are provided, parents on welfare go to school, stay in school or participate in work placement.

Being involved in workfare and learnfare is about being a contributing citizen. It's about enjoying the dignity of a job and being involved to learn new skills and meet new people. Our objective will continue to be a hand up, not a handout.

Guelph has always been an environmentally conscious city, perhaps because we're still very close to the farming community, or maybe it's because two beautiful rivers, the Speed and the Eramosa, meet in the heart of the city. Whatever the reason, in Guelph we think green. The wet-dry plant, the first municipal composting facility, is a world leader in waste management technology. Constituents, as well as many Ontarians, will be pleased that our

government is determined to improve air and water quality through initiatives like the smog plan and Drive Clean.

Guelph is seeing first hand this government's continued commitment to roads and infrastructure. Several million dollars are being invested in a major interchange reconstruction now under way. This government understands that a good road and transportation system is necessary to support a competitive economy. The Golden Triangle economic region, of which Guelph is a part, needs these vital links.

The throne speech indicated that this government will turn its attention to legislation that addresses electricity reform. We will take steps to end the monopoly of Ontario Hydro and to prepare Ontario to meet the challenges of the competition that faces us. We will also continue to cut unnecessary job-killing red tape.

Recently Frank Sheehan, the member for Lincoln and chair of the Red Tape Review Commission, visited the Guelph's chamber of commerce to explain what work his committee had undertaken and was planning.

These efforts to assist small business are appreciated by people like Steve Petrie. Steve is the president of Automated Engineering Technologies Ltd, and Steve said, "The more time I spend on filing summaries for various government agencies, the less time I have to focus on building our business and serving clients' needs."

Referendum legislation will also be introduced and give constituents one more method to keep their government accountable.

The people of Guelph clearly share our government's priority to provide the best health care possible when and where it's needed. I know that in some communities restructuring of their hospital systems is causing heartache.

You might be interested to know that 20 years ago our city voluntarily recognized that restructuring was needed to improve access and increase the benefits from every dollar for our patients. I can tell you that our city was very pleased to receive \$68 million last year from this government for two hospitals. Construction is now under way to renovate the Guelph General for a new acute care hospital. St Joseph's Hospital and Home will be a brand-new long-term-care facility. It took us 20 years, so our community knows first hand how tough hospital restructuring can be, but we also know it's worth it. We are convinced that to achieve the best care for everyone, duplication of services must be ended.

This government is spending more on health care than ever in Ontario's history. The dividends will go to restructure and improve services in particular for seniors. Already the minister has announced 1,700 temporary long-term-care beds, with more to come.

This government appreciates innovative projects like the Elliott — and this is no relation — Ellridge and Ellington as an interesting complex in the city of Guelph. It's a facility that, under the direction of David Hicks, is showing the world how to creatively give seniors the flexibility to experience comfortable living in one place with varying levels of care, from full nursing to complete, independent living.

Due to our government's promise, the family and friends of dialysis patients are also looking forward to the establishment of a dialysis clinic this fall in partnership with Guelph General and the Grand River Hospital.

In the throne speech, this government reaffirmed its plan for more money for home nursing, homemaking and supportive housing across the province.

The community care access centre was a new idea of our government when we were elected. It hasn't been without its growing pains, but I can say that in our jurisdiction this concept is working very well. New moneys will be much appreciated. The investment will be good news, but it is the investment in the community that we are most happy about, because with new care and modern technology, people are going home and need to be cared for where they are most comfortable and will heal most quickly.

This government will take care to meet the needs of seniors and the disabled. That means thousands of jobs for nurses. There are many who are excited about the fact that OHIP statements and smart card technology will help us be more knowledgeable about the actual costs of care.

Yesterday afternoon I had the pleasure of attending the retirement celebration for staff sergeant Ted Green. Ted is the former commander of the Guelph detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police. Over 250 people turned out to honour his 32 years of policing across Ontario. This was a tribute to a fine gentleman finishing an exemplary career. But it was also an indication of the respect held for the men and women who uphold our laws, protect our families and risk their own lives to keep our communities safe.

This government pledges to continue to support our law enforcement officers. We will expand initiatives like strict discipline facilities for young offenders. We will create a registry for pedophiles and sex offenders. It is the goal of this government that every community is as safe as we can possibly make it. We have already passed the Victims' Bill of Rights. We will continue to support the community Partners Against Crime Project, like victim services.

This government wants to thank outstanding volunteers like Sharon Saunders. Sharon worked very hard in the city of Guelph to develop the victim crisis assistance and referral service. This organization supports the police, trains volunteers and helps citizens cope with the trauma of being a victim of crime or an accident.

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We have teams who travel around the city to watch for car thefts and to be on alert, to be extra eyes and ears for our police officers.

Health care, education, safe communities, job creation and welfare reform are the priorities that Ontarians have indicated they want our government to focus on. This government has been busy enacting turnaround legislation and policies and we're already seeing the progress from those changes. But we've also been very busy listening, whether it's in town halls or meetings, sending out flyers or questionnaires. The people of Ontario need to know that the major changes and legislation are almost com-

plete. Now is the time to implement, to consolidate and to fine-tune our initiatives.

We have come a very long way — from the brink of bankruptcy three years ago and we are excited about the future.

We are looking forward to the future, with your guidance and your advice.

We are looking forward to hearing from interesting people like Joe Kovacs. Joe dropped into my constituency office last Friday during my regular coffee and conversation open house to share his views and ideas. We had a wonderful time. That's because he cares about what happens to this province, and I can say that every member of this government cares passionately about revitalizing Ontario, cares passionately about bringing back hope, prosperity and opportunity for every person in Ontario.

Before I ever decided to enter politics and leave my life as a shopkeeper and a teacher, I went to see and sought the advice of a very wonderful person. Alf Hales was one of the greatest, if not the greatest, statesmen the city of Guelph has ever had. He ably represented our riding in Ottawa as the Progressive Conservative member of Parliament for 17 years. When I was talking to Alf about whether or not I should run for politics and whether or not it was time for me to practise what I preached about how Ontario should be improved, he advised me to remember some words that I think actually came from John Diefenbaker. "Remember, Brenda," said Alf, "Polls are for dogs — do the right thing."

This wonderful man and terrific community leader passed away in February. He will be very much missed. But he was right: Politicians must always do the right thing.

I believe our government is doing the right thing. We have not been shy about tackling tough issues and problems — tough issues and problems that former governments shied away from because they thought they might be politically troublesome. I entered politics because I was worried about Ontario, worried that Ontario was in big trouble due to the misguided and inept policies of the opposition parties. What they were allowing to happen was something I did not want for my children, did not want for my city, my community or my province.

The people of Guelph and Ontario have indicated that this government is on the right track as far as policy is concerned. They want us to keep going forward, and we are going to continue. We are going to continue to rebuild this province. We are going to do it thoughtfully and carefully.

Exciting things are happening in the city of Guelph.

This summer we're looking forward to hosting the Ontario Summer Games. Volunteers are coming from every corner to get ready to welcome people from across this country to our city and appreciate athletic excellence.

At the end of May we're looking forward to the Guelph Spring Festival. Our new community arts centre, the River Run Centre, beautifully built on the banks of the Speed river, is going to be filled with talented performers and excited audiences.

This week our Ontario Hockey League team, the Guelph Storm, is battling it out with the Ottawa 67s in the finals for the Ontario championship.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): Good team.

Mrs Elliott: Yes, great team. Big game tonight, as a matter of fact.

Exciting things are happening in Guelph and across the province. There is very much a renewed sense of optimism and hope about where we're going, about the future that's before us. We are listening and we are going to continue to listen closely to the advice of constituents across this province. After all, it is their ideas we have been implementing, and to their credit, their ideas are working.

So we will listen as we move forward with care and with determination, because together we are going to make Ontario strong.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It is with great pride and humility that I stand before this Legislature today to second the speech from the throne. If it's appropriate, I wish to thank the Lieutenant Governor, Hilary Weston, for delivering her speech with such dignity. Traditions are important, not only for me but I believe for all Ontarians.

On a personal note, I wish to share with the members that last Thursday I had two students attend the Legislature to hear the delivery of the speech from the throne — Kristy Dalton and Ryan Moynes, who attend Port Perry High School and are currently doing a political science research project. They were very privileged to meet at first hand the Lieutenant Governor, the Premier of the province, the Minister of Education and a number of other ministers and dignitaries of the day, just to prove to our young students and our youth that indeed we are an accessible government.

As the member for Durham East, I share this honour with every constituent whom I was elected to represent. My riding truly reflects all that is good about Ontario. Durham East has been represented for the past 50 years by Conservatives, except for two brief single terms by two NDP members.

Durham has great industrial workers, self-employed individuals, professionals, engineers, doctors, nurses, teachers, accountants, bank employees, public sector employees, century family farm businesses, young families, single-parent families, as well as many retired people on fixed incomes.

Just recently the Honourable Cam Jackson, the minister responsible for seniors, visited and spent a morning with the residents of Wilmot Creek, interacting with those people and answering their questions. They truly appreciated the accessibility of this government.

Durham is the fastest-growing area in all of Canada, and Durham is a great place to live, to work and to raise a family. I represent hardworking employees of General Motors, Ontario Hydro and the many small businesses that make up the economy of Durham, businesses like Bowmanville Foundry, undergoing an expansion at the moment; Goodyear tire and rubber, for many years the backbone of the Bowmanville community; Brookling

Transport, a family-owned and -operated business; Rushwood Truss; Brooklin Concrete and many more.

In preparing these remarks, I was also thinking about the truly small business people who make up the main streets in our communities, for instance, Ron Hooper of Hooper's Jewellers, currently the chairman of the local business improvement area; and Ron Hope, owner of Stedmans in Newcastle; Murray and Linda Taylor, who spend countless hours in their hardware store, Rolph's, on the main street in Orono; and Tom and Daphne Mitchell, in Settlement House in Port Perry, who were just recently recognized as the merchandising business of the year; Gareth Grainger from Peace of Earth in Port Perry, as well as Paula and Bill Lishman of Lishman Enterprises. The list could go on.

Agriculture is the second-largest industry not just in Ontario but indeed in Durham. My thoughts are with the farm community at this time of year, as they prepare diligently to go on the land to plant the seeds to make the food that we eat — people like Dave and Leha Frew; Don and Jim Rickard; Karen and Dennis Yellowlees; Joe Christl and his son; Terry and Phyllis Price; Peter and Joan Tax; the Schillings family of White Feather Farms north of Oshawa; John and Magda Zoelman; Lisa and Henk Mulders of Link Greenhouses operation; Barry and Anna Bragg, who have a well-known international seed operation just outside Bowmanville. The list goes on.

1550

The agricultural business is famous in our part of Ontario for our apple orchards, beef, dairy, sheep, pork, poultry and almost all manner of field crops. It is so important to the local economy that both the federal minister as well as our Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Honourable Noble Villeneuve, visited Blackstock in the last month alone.

I know our Premier, who visited our riding in February, extends his thanks to all Ontarians for helping us achieve our common goals, common goals held by all Ontarians, I believe. Just as in the recent ice storm in Ontario and Quebec, people in communities like those in my riding of Durham East come together to help one another. No one can achieve anything alone. It takes a team working together to achieve much. Imagine in less than a year how much we have achieved by working together.

I personally thank our Premier, Mike Harris, and his cabinet, first of all and most importantly for their courage in times of trial and their leadership and tireless work and commitment to allow us to accomplish the commitments we made to Ontario. Most of all, our promises made during the election of June 1995 are now the promises kept. All of our caucus is committed to eliminating the barriers to hope and opportunity for every Ontarian.

The people of Durham East elected five members to this Legislature on June 8, 1995. They were known as the five Blue Jays: Julia Munro from Durham-York; Jerry Ouellette from Oshawa; the Honourable Janet Ecker, Minister of Community and Social Services, from Durham West; the Honourable Jim Flaherty, Minister of Labour, from Durham Centre. We are a team, the Durham team.

We work to support all of the people not just in Durham, but indeed in the province. We are very flattered to have two members in the cabinet from Durham alone. Collectively, we thank every Ontarian for their personal commitment and understanding during this first semester of our term. It has been tough at times, agreed, but we have climbed the mountain together.

There is little doubt that we are on the right track if one looks at recent articles and polls that have been completed. For instance, I refer to the article in the *Toronto Star* — imagine that, the *Star* — of Thursday, April 23, by Frank Jones. I go on here to reinforce:

“...Harris is this province’s outstanding political leader of the era. His government...will be honoured for that rarest of all political commodities: courage.”

He goes on to make other predictions about other leaders. For instance: “By contrast, his predecessor, Bob Rae, while a decent and able person, will go down as an abysmal failure.” There are other comments within that.

Also a recent poll that I believe was done by the *Star* or the CBC or something goes on to outline, for instance, the questions, “Is the government doing a good job on Ontario’s deficit?” Seventy per cent of the people agreed. “Is the government keeping its promises?” Sixty per cent agreed. “Are we moving too quickly?” Some 72% say we are.

That message has been heard by myself and, I am certain, the Premier of the province. It goes on to recognize that we understand what the people want and we have to communicate the message more clearly.

Another important question was: “As you know now, the government has recently announced a number of reforms to public education. I am going to name some of these reforms and would like you to tell me whether you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove” etc.

“Bringing back the basics to education”: 76% approve of those reforms to the curriculum. “Introducing standardized testing”: 78% approved. Clearly, people understand we are doing the right thing, we are on the right track, and clearly the people of Ontario want us to listen and consult more.

There are other articles I could refer to, but to spare the members, I would ask them to refer to some of the articles I have just outlined here.

People in my riding tell me they agree with what we are doing. I quote: “There is little doubt changes had to be made.” At the same time, I recognize that many people are critical of the speed and pace of change, as well as our failure to communicate more effectively.

I continually try and remind people of our motive. In the past 10 years we have had study after study on health care reform, education reform, municipal reform, assessment reform, tax reform, welfare reform and reform after reform. What we really had is 10 years of study. We had 10 years of promises. We had 10 years of no action. We had 10 years of lack of leadership and we had 10 years of taxing and spending. This has all changed.

The free-spending spirit of the Liberals increased taxes 33 times, for a net of \$3.1 billion in increased tax revenue from hardworking Ontarians, and we are reversing this trend.

With the Peterson Liberals, between 1985 and 1995, employment was actually going up — more people were employed — while welfare rates were increased by 60%. In fact, welfare rolls grew by 43% during one of the highest employment periods in Ontario’s history. Even the then NDP critic, Floyd Laughren, was quoted as saying of the Liberals, I think very succinctly, “The gap is not only in dollars but in credibility.” I would say Floyd was right then and Floyd would be right now.

Between 1990 and 1995, the NDP under Bob Rae could not stem the tide of spending. They doubled the deficit to almost \$12 billion, they doubled the debt to almost \$100 billion, and everyone knew that the social contract was a poor, temporary solution to a much bigger problem. The NDP continued to raise taxes and keep spending right to their very end.

We are continually trying to remind people of the motive. It’s important that they share the commitment. When we were elected in 1995, less than three years ago, we were spending \$1 million more each and every hour than we were taking in as revenue. Imagine. There are 8,760 hours in a year and we were spending \$8 billion in interest alone on the \$100-billion debt. All of this, by the way, was borrowed money.

Changes had to be made, and quickly, because our debt interest was crowding out our ability to pay for people programs, such services as health care, home care and education.

We promised no cuts to health care. When elected, health care spending was \$17.4 billion. Today, our annual spending on health care is over \$18 billion. We are changing the way money is spent from institutions to people, with increased spending to home care, long-term care, early detection, treatment and nutrition for children.

The president of Sick Kids’ Hospital, Michael Strofolino, was recently quoted as saying, “The latest crisis in health care has nothing to do with restructuring hospitals and has everything to do with the remarkable increase in infectious diseases.” He went on to say, “A more critical analysis of how to treat people outside of hospital, not a shower of money, is what Ontario’s health care system needs.” Mr Strofolino also argues that “long-overdue restructuring will reduce duplication and overlap while creating new professions and greater access to health care for Ontarians.”

I, along with other members of the caucus, am working with our Minister of Health, the Honourable Elizabeth Witmer, to bring to her attention the need to address growth areas like Durham and the 905 area. I meet regularly with Virginia McLaughlin, the chair of the GTA Health Care Alliance; along with Jim Armstrong, Tom Schonberg and Victoria Girling of the Bowmanville Memorial Hospital; Guy Kirvan and Frank Pinquet of North Durham Health Care, Port Perry and Uxbridge hospitals; as well as Patricia Adolphis and Jean Achmatowicz-

MacLeod from Oshawa General Hospital; and Brock Hovey and Cathy Tunney from Whitby General Hospital. We do work together, we do listen and we keep the minister informed of the needs of the people of Durham. I am confident that our area will get the badly needed growth funding for which these people have been arguing for years.

It is sad the way things get reported. The federal government has cut over \$2 billion in transfer payments to Ontario's health care, yet everyone blames the cuts on Harris. It's an easy line. It could be argued, if one looks at it, that the federal Liberal government has cut \$2 billion from health care to balance their budgets on the backs of Ontarians, yet our government has protected health care. We are the ones who have protected health care, and you could look around the table to see who's not playing the game.

1600

We promised no cuts to classroom spending. We did, however, promise to cut spending on administration, and we again have done what we promised.

The April 6 edition of Maclean's magazine reports that in 1997 Ontario is the highest-spending Canadian jurisdiction on education, at \$6,915 per student, higher than Quebec, which is at \$6,736, and BC, which is at \$6,074 per student. We're spending the most, and the question to be asked is, are we getting the results that our students need?

I could refer to this article. I think it's worth every member spending some time looking at that Maclean's article and understanding that it's written objectively, reporting what actually is going on. It's quite interesting, because the announcement for education funding was made of course at the Durham Board of Education, the winner of the Carl Bertelsmann award for excellence; in fact, the announcement was made at Pine Ridge Secondary School.

I'm reading the report from Maclean's here: "Students cringed in embarrassment at the unionists' noisy protests." It was just a theatrical, frightening situation. "'It was pretty intimidating,' said Nikki Lewis, 17, who none the less had sympathy for the teachers." That's understandable; I do as well. "'You could see the tears in their eyes and how horrible they are feeling, worrying about their jobs and about us.'" It's all true.

Another quote: "But the system now is not working well, noted Niki Ramdeen," an 18-year-old student and president of a student council. I'm going to repeat: She said the system is not working well now. Niki, an OAC student, takes chemistry courses in one of the 19 portable classrooms onsite, just outside the school's main entrance, a brand-new school, a beautiful new school. Niki has to book time and wait to use the labs inside the building.

That tells me, when I look at the Durham board and the beautiful board office and our students in portables — it's their futures we're spending education dollars on.

I believe that article is worth referring to again. It's not written by any politician of any party.

We have just announced the new student-focused funding model, as I mentioned, and we are spending \$14.4 billion on education. Sixty-five percent of educational spending will be in the classroom, where it belongs. We have reduced the number of boards of education from 168 to approximately 72. We have committed money for growth, protected average class size at 25 for elementary and 22 for secondary, and we have introduced a new user-friendly report card. Our new curriculum has been favourably received by both teachers and parents. We have introduced standardized testing and the focus is on excellence. At the same time, we have protected special education funding and guaranteed the funding for junior kindergarten, as decided by the school boards, exactly as we promised in our election document.

Our Premier and the Minister of Education, the Honourable Dave Johnson, have repeatedly said that we have great teachers and great students but our system of education had to change. No government of any stripe, as some would suggest, would set out to wreck our educational system. This sort of fearmongering and spurious comment serves only to frighten and unsettle students, parents and teachers.

I believe that most individual teachers are honestly concerned about the changes. I have heard their pleas for their students. I have listened. I promise to continue to listen closely to teachers, students and parents. We must continue to work together and move forward together. A fight is not going to benefit any student and certainly not the future for our young people.

I recognize that the two-week strike was out of fear and desperation. I recognize that. Change and fear of the unknown are unsettling prospects for anyone, and we as a government failed to communicate in a timely and effective manner, I completely agree.

Clearly the strike was a power struggle over who controls public education: the union leadership or the elected government.

No single person can break with their leadership without consequences. No single parent, no student, no teacher, no principal, no school board administrator or school trustee could stand alone without suffering the wrath of the union leadership.

The strike was well orchestrated by the union side, no question about that, and the government failed to get the message out. However, the real loss was the teaching time our students missed in this academic year. I hope it doesn't affect their futures. It's hard to measure these things in short periods of time. After all is said and done, I believe our education system will improve as a result of our reforms, many of which, by the way, were instituted by the previous government. I commend Mr Dave Cooke for his hard work and commitment to the EIC and the reform of education — and others, the parent councils and all those who are involved in working to improve education.

In Durham, our education funding will mean that over 20 million new dollars will go towards classroom educa-

tion. Who could say, "Where's the \$1 billion they were all threatening to cut from education?"

At the same time, I recognize that the government and the union leadership are at odds over who is in control of our education system, but this is not a new argument. Just the past weekend, I was reviewing an old article in the *Canadian Statesman* dated May 1973, and the article was exactly the same case: Who's in control?

I believe that taxpayers, which includes teachers and parents, want the highest-quality education system for our youth. Everyone wants an education system that is accessible, accountable and effective.

As a former school trustee, I am tired of too many buses, too many bosses and not enough supplies in our classrooms. I believe the new education funding model addresses many of those outstanding, long-overdue reforms.

As a parent of five children and a spouse of a teacher, I am not satisfied with anything less than a system focused on classroom excellence. We must continue to listen and work together in education. Our collective futures depend on it.

Post-secondary education is a very important investment in all our futures. Gary Polonsky of Durham College and University Centre is on a single-purpose mission to bring a university centre to Durham. I support his vision and his \$12-million fund-raising campaign to put actions into place.

We promised tax cuts would equal jobs. In fact, it's working. We are delivering on both: less taxes and more jobs. The facts speak for themselves.

In the next provincial budget, in May, our Minister of Finance, the Honourable Ernie Eves, will deliver on the last part of our commitment of a 30% reduction to provincial income tax. This means over \$100 per month in the pockets and purses of the average taxpaying family. Overall, this will put about \$3 billion back into the economy and the pockets of individual Ontarians to spend, invest or pay off accumulated debt. No matter what taxpayers do with the money, it will create jobs. People who invest will ultimately create jobs, people who spend will create jobs, and people who pay off accumulated debt will save on interest, which will give them more disposable income in the future. No matter how you cut it, a tax cut equals jobs.

People earning less than \$50,000 per year will see their personal income tax go down over 30%. My fear is that the federal Liberals will claw back that tax cut through Canada pension and UI contributions and any other scheme. Their plan is: Tax and spend. You must have noticed it. I'm certain other members of the House agree.

Looking in the dictionary, at first I really couldn't find the meaning for "Liberal." It didn't stand for anything particularly. Then I looked on the Internet, and under one of the search engines, Yahoo, where I thought I'd maybe find "Liberal," the term "Liberal" came up 33 times under one search: 33 tax increases. When I looked a little closer, it came down very clearly to an understanding that one thing you can count on in Liberals is tax and spend, or it

could be spend and tax. That should be the memory, that's the legacy and that's the proof. Look on the Web.

1610

We promised to cut red tape and barriers to growth. Mr Frank Sheehan, the MPP for Lincoln, is the Premier's appointed chairman to the Red Tape Commission. Frank and members of the commission have recently visited my riding on two occasions to listen to concerns on red tape and needless regulations.

In Canada it is estimated that regulations and rules cost our economy \$85.7 billion annually. Imagine that: some \$12,000 per household, every single household in this province, wasted on overregulation for government purposes.

In the last session alone at Queen's Park we passed 10 red tape bills, which eliminated over 500 needless regulations. We reduced the time for business registration from six weeks to 30 minutes. Imagine that: eliminating more than 1,000 unnecessary annual licences and permits and reports for farm and food processing businesses.

We are working on one-window building permits, on consolidation of ambulance regulations and sunseting regulations that will now have to systematically be reviewed.

I'm sure all members concur that regulations must be reviewed to make government more accountable to the people. Actually, the whole exercise is turning the culture around. I believe many of the civil servants are far more customer-focused than ever before in a world of very competitive environment. After all, we have to let small business get on with creating jobs.

On the job front, Ontario accounts for 30% of the population of Canada, yet we are gaining over 60% of all the net new jobs in Canada. Since 1995, 60% of all the jobs — 314,000 net new private sector jobs — were created in Ontario. By the way, 261,000 of these jobs have been created in the last 10 months alone. The pace is staggering. In fact, it's reported that we're creating 1,000 jobs a week.

Consumer confidence is up, new housing starts are up, auto sales, which are important in my riding, are up, and tourism is up generally across the province. There's a great article in the weekend papers. The anticipation of this summer's tourism is going to be at an unprecedented level.

The restaurant and entertainment business has never been busier. In Bowmanville, King Street Bar and Grill owner Kevin Anyan is confident, according to his statement, and the new Hanc's Too restaurant is doing very well. Another new Bow and Fiddle restaurant and an excellent Silk's fine restaurant, as well as the new theatre and restaurant complex to the west end of town, are all busy and doing wonderful business.

In Port Perry, the Brown Couch Coffee Shop seems to be thriving, along with the famous downtown in Port Perry, especially the Nutty Chocolatier, where owner Ken Koury is expanding into a franchise operation here in Toronto.

Other success stories in the area: For instance, Ocala Wines, north of Brooklin and Whitby, has grown from a family-operated orchard winery to a point where the owners, the Smith family, now regularly win medals for their quality fruit wines and are also listed with the LCBO.

I want to thank ministers Tsubouchi and Saunderson for visiting my riding to help them celebrate this important milestone in the growth of their small family business.

On another note, Archibald Orchards and Winery was expanded and diversified to the point where they are beyond the orchard business, the core business, and are now also producing prize-winning quality products at wine-tasting competitions. I have no doubt the future is bright for them as well.

This government intends to work very closely with and is committed to small business. Small business is growth for each and every one of us. I know without question that all of our members are there to support in whatever way possible.

Both of these destinations I've mentioned — Ocala Wines as well as Archibald Orchards — are important destinations and many of you should consider a day trip to my riding of Durham East.

Let me just share with you for a moment some of the great destinations in Durham East. We're the home of one of the oldest and largest private zoos in Ontario, the Bowmanville Zoo, previously known as the Cream of Barley Zoo. You see the Exotic Cat World in Orono on Highways 35 and 115 on the way up to the Kawartha Lakes. While in Orono, stop in at Carter's Village Bakery Shop for lunch. You will be amazed at the service. The dessert is well known. Certainly I have been there on a number of — it's worth the drive to Orono.

Also visit Tyrone Mill, one of the oldest and finest working mills in Ontario. Bob Shaffer, the mill operator, operates the mill in the village of Tyrone, just north of Bowmanville. The mill is operating on most weekends, doing apple cider presses and also processing lumber and other kinds of mill operations.

Port Perry, you know, is the home of chiropractic. How many people knew that? That's in my riding. By the way, I might say that chiropractic is a very important, growing business and many people want that choice in health care. But Dr Palmer's home was in Port Perry. There is now Palmer Park, which is on the shores of Lake Scugog and is an excellent place for a family picnic and just a leisurely walk around the lake in beautiful downtown Port Perry. It's very picturesque. I would encourage people to visit.

Durham region has some of the finest local museums, of which Clarke Museum and Archives is probably the best known, and it's located on Highways 35 and 115, just outside Orono — well worth your visit. Mark Jackman, by the way, is the curator there. We also have Charles Taws as the curator at the Bowmanville Museum, an old restored Victorian home. Quite remarkable, the authentic work that has gone into it and the volunteer board. These museums make up, in small-town Ontario, very important tourist destinations, and of course, many of the boards and many of the activities there are done on a volunteer basis.

Now that I think about it, I'm not surprised that my area, Durham, is the fastest-growth area in all of Canada, now that I think about it as I have outlined it. We have, in the south, Lake Ontario, with great fishing and boating. In the north, we have the Oak Ridges moraine and the Ganaraska forest, and numerous small, safe and friendly communities inhabited by wonderful people. Where else would you sooner live?

To accommodate the growth, we have an awfully long list of important and distinguished home builders, such as Saverio Montenairo of Melody Homes of Bowmanville, as well as operations in Peterborough, along with Bill Daniell of the Kaitlin Group; Bob Hann from Valiant Properties, building great homes for people; Frank Veltri of Med-Tri Developments; and Mario Veltri of Marianna Developments — a long-standing quality builder in the area who lives just outside my riding. In fact, he has opened a small golf course just outside Oshawa at the Holiday Inn there, a wonderful destination as well. We also have Hanu Halminen from Halminen Homes and Stephen Kassinger, Bob Schickendanz of the two brothers, a long-standing business operation, and many others working hard to build quality homes in a very hot market. As I told you, it's the fastest-growth area in all of Canada, so quality homes in the market.

Again, I have to thank the municipal people as well for working to make the planning process as smooth and seamless and possible. It's very important, and our government, of course, has done some things with new home sales, the land transfer tax for first-time home buyers. This is the third year of that program giving new home buyers that tax break or that needed break. This government is there for young families.

Good government really provides solid leadership, and we are a government that is accountable and committed to doing exactly what we promised. We must continue to listen and move forward to the new century with confidence that our futures and our children's futures are not any longer threatened by spiralling deficits and debt. We simply need responsible, accountable government.

In the final analysis, people make Ontario great — a great place to live, to work and raise a family — people like Elsie Fisk of Newcastle, whom I have just spoken to on the phone. Elsie has not been feeling well for the last couple of weeks, but certainly she will be alive and well in the next election, as she has for many years. People like Edna Larmer of Port Perry Nursing Home, who will be 104 years old this Friday. I send my congratulations to Edna. Edna lives at Port Perry Nursing Home, along with Mauda Waite, who will be 101 on June 18, 1998. Imagine the changes these people have seen, and certainly for the first time in history they have seen a tax cut. That's something they've witnessed that has never happened before.

Also an important constituent to me is an elderly statesman, a gentleman, Mr Lloyd Stephenson, who at the age of 80 is still challenging publicly elected people to be honest and accountable. He appears regularly before local council, where I first met him, challenging everything

from snow removal to tax increases — a great, great constituent. I like to speak to Lloyd to keep honest and to keep my feet on the ground so that I'm accountable. That's exactly what every politician should do: find people with a world of experience and the time to share it with you.

Some people have left this world a better place, people like Mel Putnam who was a young school teacher taken with cancer, and a great friend of not just me but my family and his son. Angie Helpard: Her husband Lynn Helpard is now alone and lives on the beautiful gardens. Angie was well known throughout the area for her care of gardens; in fact, she published a garden magazine, as Mr Helpard is now the publisher of World of Wheels magazine. They had retired to just outside the Bowmanville area to a beautiful piece of property. Now that Angie has left us, all that is left are the gardens. Jim Kapteyn, a long-time leader in the community, passed away as well as Paul Riley. Paul Riley, quite a young man actually, was the first riding president of the Durham East Progressive Conservative Association. I just met him briefly. He just passed away, and it's quite sad, to leave his wife Marion alone.

Some people leave the world a better place for what they've contributed. I think every person who is elected to public office should take that to heart and recognize that we one this side, and I'm sure on the other side of the House, try our best to leave Ontario a better place than what we found.

With the support of my wife Peggy, our family, our friends and our five children — I must repeat them for the record. My son Erin is in the armed forces and living in Halifax and flies on the Sea King helicopters which are kind of shaky. My daughter Rebecca is now married and lives in Australia. My daughter Marnie is one of the three children I have in university. She's in third year at Western, and she's coming home. They're all looking for jobs. Andrew is a young first-year student, a member of the Varsity sports team and an excellent tri-athlete. He's looking for work; I think he's volunteering at a YMCA camp for some of his time. Also, my youngest daughter Rochelle goes to the University of Windsor and she's

home. All of these children will be out trying to take part in this new vibrant economy in Ontario. Hopefully they will find jobs.

As I think of it, all of the students in my area — a number of them have been visiting back and forth at our home — it's important that they feel the future, that we're on the right track, and I feel they are. They come to me and they ask me and I tell them we're having a student forum in two weeks' time — it will be held in Bowmanville — on youth employment. We're working together with Manpower, the federal ministry, within the resources of our own ministry, as well as others, like the John Howard Society, to provide some kind of workshop stressing the important of attitudes, résumés and such things as workplace safety — very, very important.

I think if we look forward to Ontario, indeed, on behalf of all the children and youth and seniors I've mentioned in my remarks today — it's been a real pleasure — I feel confident that we have a bright future here in Ontario and that we will have a better, more accountable health care system, an improved education system, safer communities and indeed a stronger economy.

It's not just Durham East where it is a great place to live. Indeed, all Ontario is more the province of promise.

It's my pleasure to move to second the adoption of the speech from the throne.

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): Mr Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The member for Kenora moves adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): Mr Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Speaker: The minister moves adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 6:30 of the clock later on today.

The House adjourned at 1625.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma	Wildman, Bud (ND)	Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Guelph	Elliott, Brenda (PC)
Beaches-Woodbine	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Halton Centre / -Centre	Young, Terence H. (PC)
Brampton North / -Nord	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Halton North / -Nord	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Brampton South / -Sud	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Hamilton Centre / -Centre	Christopherson, David (ND)
		Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
		Hamilton Mountain	Pettit, Trevor (PC)
Brant-Haldimand	Preston, Peter L. (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Ross, Lillian (PC)
Brantford	Johnson, Ron (PC)	Hastings-Peterborough	Danford, Harry (PC)
Bruce	Fisher, Barbara (PC)	High Park-Swansea	Shea, Derwyn (PC)
Burlington South / -Sud	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Seniors Issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (Affaires des personnes âgées)	Huron	Johns, Helen (PC)
	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kenora	Miclash, Frank (L)
Cambridge	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of the Environment, government House leader / ministre de l'Environnement, leader parlementaire du gouvernement	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Carleton	Morin, Gilles E. (L)	Kitchener	Wetlaufer, Wayne (PC)
	Carroll, Jack (PC)	Kitchener-Wilmot	Leadston, Gary L. (PC)
Carleton East / -Est	Wood, Len (ND)	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	Pouliot, Gilles (ND)
Chatham-Kent	Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Lambton	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Cochrane North / -Nord	Cleary, John C. (L)	Lanark-Renfrew	Jordan, W. Leo (PC)
Cochrane South / -Sud	Johnson, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Education and Training / ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation	Lawrence	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
Cornwall	Silipo, Tony (ND)	Lcds-Grenville	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
Don Mills	Castrilli, Annamarie (L)	Lincoln	Sheehan, Frank (PC)
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Downsview	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	London South / -Sud	Wood, Bob (PC)
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Durham Centre / -Centre	Munro, Julia (PC)		Smith, Bruce (PC)
Durham East / -Est	Saunderson, William (PC)	Middlesex	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Durham West / -Ouest	North, Peter (Ind)	Mississauga East / -Est	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
	Hoy, Pat (L)	Mississauga North / -Nord	Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Children's Issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (enfance)
Durham-York	Crozier, Bruce (L)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Privatization) / ministre sans portefeuille (privatisation)
Eglinton	Ford, Douglas B. (PC)	Mississauga West / -Ouest	
Elgin	Kells, Morley (PC)		
Essex-Kent	Hastings, John (PC)	Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne	Grimmett, Bill (PC)
Essex South / -Sud	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Speaker / Président	Nepean	Baird, John R. (PC)
Etobicoke-Humber	McLeod, Lyn (L)	Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Niagara South / -Sud	Hudak, Tim (PC)
Etobicoke-Rexdale	Vankoughnet, Bill (PC)		
Etobicoke West / -Ouest			
Fort William			
Fort York			
Frontenac-Addington			

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
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Norfolk	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Sault Ste Marie / Sault-Sainte-Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)
Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Oakville South / -Sud	Carr, Gary (PC)	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Newman, Dan (PC)
Oakwood	Colle, Mike (L)	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Oriole	Caplan, David (L)	Scarborough-Ellesmere	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Scarborough North / -Nord	Curling, Alvin (L)
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Ottawa East / -Est	Grandmaître, Bernard (L)	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)
Ottawa-Rideau	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Simcoe East / -Est	McLean, Allan K. (PC)
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Simcoe West / -Ouest	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Ottawa West / -Ouest	Cullen, Alex (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Sudbury East / -Est	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Parkdale	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Timiskaming	Ramsay, David (L)
Parry Sound	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Victoria-Haliburton	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines, président du Conseil de gestion
Perth	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Waterloo North / -Nord	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Welland-Thorold	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Port Arthur	Gravelle, Michael (L)	Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Wentworth East / -Est	Doyle, Ed (PC)
Prince Edward-Lennox- South Hastings / Prince Edward-Lennox- Hastings-Sud	Fox, Gary (PC)	Wentworth North / -Nord	Skarica, Toni (PC)
Quinte	Rollins, E.J. Douglas (PC)	Willowdale	Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique	Wilson Heights	Kwinter, Monte (L)
Renfrew North / -Nord	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Windsor-Riverside	Lessard, Wayne (ND)
Riverdale	Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Windsor-Sandwich	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
S-D-G & East Grenville / S-D-G et Grenville-Est	Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Windsor-Walkerville	Duncan, Dwight (L)
St Andrew-St Patrick	Bassett, Hon / L'hon Isabel (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs	York Centre / -Centre	Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)	York East / -Est	Parker, John L. (PC)
St Catharines-Brock	Froese, Tom (PC)	York Mills	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister without Portfolio / ministre sans portefeuille
St George-St David	Leach, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	York-Mackenzie	Klees, Frank (PC)
		Yorkview	Sergio, Mario (L)
		York South / -Sud	Kennedy, Gerard (L)
		Nickel Belt	Vacant

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Toby Barrett, Dave Boushy, David Caplan,
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Marion Boyd, Jack Carroll, Annamarie Castrilli,
Dwight Duncan, Tim Hudak, Frank Klees,
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Second Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 27 April 1998

Lundi 27 avril 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 27 April 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 27 avril 1998

The House met at 1830.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INTERIM SUPPLY

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): In the absence of Mr Sterling, I move that the Minister of Finance be authorized to pay the salaries of the civil servants and other necessary payments pending the voting of supply for the period commencing May 1, 1998, and ending October 31, 1998, such payments to be charged to the proper appropriation following the voting of supply.

I wish to confirm at the outset that I believe there is all-party agreement to share the time equally among the three parties this evening.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon Mr Eves: I will keep my payments — my comments; that's a Freudian slip there, I'm afraid — very brief this evening, to allow more members to participate in this debate. I'm pleased to put forward the motion for interim supply.

As most members are aware, the supply motion is simply providing the government with the authority to make payments to hospitals, boards of education, municipalities, suppliers, civil servants and others who do business with the province of Ontario or receive payments from the province of Ontario. These payments are currently being made under the authority of a motion for interim supply which came into effect on November 1 of last year, 1997. The motion for interim supply is now required, as the authority under the existing motion expires on April 30, 1998, and payments cannot be made after that date. To ensure that all payments scheduled on or after May 1 are made on time in all parts of the province, including especially northern Ontario, it is necessary to provide the banking and distribution system with some lead time. The practice has been to give them at least five working days to ensure that all payments are received on time.

Scheduled payments made early in May include, among others, payments for general welfare, transfers, as I've said, to hospitals, school boards and children's aid societies. To ensure that the province meets its obligations in an orderly fashion, I hope that all members will be supportive in ensuring the motion is passed this evening.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I can't tell you how good it is to be back in the House and have

an opportunity, after a five-month delay, to call on the government to make the appropriate changes necessary in a number of areas that have been lacking over the three years they've been in office. The interim supply bill gives us a chance to have a look at what the government is spending money on, where the money has gone and where we expect the money should go.

As many people in my community know, health care is the number one concern where I come from. We also know that people in Windsor have long been suffering from the negative effects of the Mike Harris government, and now we see that the balance of Ontario is catching up. I wanted to spend some time on some of the issues that have come up in Windsor, where we have made a number of attempts to get our information to the Minister of Health. That has been of no avail.

In February of this year, we launched a health line in my community so that more and more people who had experienced the health system would call. We took the opportunity to take those concerns and send them directly to the Minister of Health. We struck a health line, and people in my riding could call 254-0440 and launch concerns. We would then transcribe all their concerns from the health line, send them back to the people who called and then we would fax the concerns over to the Minister of Health.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): What's the area code?

Mrs Pupatello: It's area code 519. If I'm not mistaken, we have a number of callers from Lambton who have actually taken the opportunity to call the Windsor health line to talk to us about their concerns.

Let me just put in perspective the kinds of calls we are getting. I suppose that in the last 20 or 30 years many hospitals have been faced with complaints from patients over time, but there's always a kind of pattern set that tells us where the problem lies, where it originates. We know in our community — for the last more than three years it has gotten progressively worse, to the point of breaking now — that because the operating budgets of hospitals have been cut back so severely by this government, because promises made by this government were broken, were not kept, because this government goes forward and makes announcement after announcement of reinvestments in the community that never happen, we are now at the breaking point.

Let me share with you a couple of stories from people who actually gave permission to us to use them publicly. We have hundreds of calls that have come in, and we have

an average of five to six calls a day. I'd like to share with you this story from Archie Garrick. He lives on Daytona Street.

He said that on February 2 of this year he went into emergency with an asthma attack and chest pains. He was left in the waiting room until 1 o'clock in the morning, at which time he was given a room with a cot in it to lie on. At 3 o'clock he still had not had his EKG or even seen a doctor. While he was in there one of the nurses who used to work at IODE Windsor west was there, whom he recognized. "They treated me there," he says, "for the last three years, when they were open. I got to know them very well. They're good nurses. I felt so sorry for them, because they were crying when I left. I walked out of there. If this is what it takes, then I don't need this. It's just a sad situation. If this is the mess they put the hospitals and medical care in then I think they better take another look at what they're doing. If they want to kill me, all they have to do is say so. I have a good mind to charge them with attempted murder.

"While I was in there, a young fellow came in" — he works at one of the auto plants — "on a stretcher, with a possible heart attack. He was 23 years old. At 3 o'clock he was still not attended to either, although his foreman was sitting with him the entire time. I think it's sad, damn sad. It is unfortunate that we have to put up with that kind of stuff, all because of the stupidity of the government that doesn't really give a damn. Well that's it for me. Like I said I wish nothing bad ever happens to me. I hope the government goes upside down and never comes back to power."

That message was from Archie Garrick.

There is another woman who talked about her neighbour. In this case, she was talking about how her neighbour was sent home with information that an appointment with a specialist would be made by a hospital at 9 o'clock the following day, but the woman lives alone.

"That morning I found her. She had fainted and was on the floor and was still in a great deal of pain. On contacting the hospital, no appointment had been made by them. She was returned by ambulance and was still awaiting consultation after four days. Is this how we treat our citizens? Our city was not prepared to close two emergency services. The remaining have several years of reconfiguration to be effective. How many will die because of dollars? Thank you."

These are the kinds of messages we get time and time again. The people in the Windsor community are very bright. They are very clever. They have actively followed the restructuring of health services in our community for a long time, because it isn't new. In 1994, our own community came forward with a Win-Win report, which was sanctioned by the government; it was guaranteed by the government to have reinvestments made in our community before you started cutting services. This government failed to deliver.

In April of last year you closed another emergency room. The buildup to that, I know the members of the House remember well. We went on about it day after day:

"Some 18 days to go to the closure of the west side emergency room. When is the reinvestment coming?" It never came.

I want to tell you what happened last week. Last week the government made its third announcement of money for an emergency room expansion at one of our sites. This is the third time it has been made. The emergency expansion of the remaining sites is still not completed. Even when it's completed, you have not adjusted the operating budgets of the hospitals; you cut them. So, where we have an emergency room that's going to be this big today, because it hasn't been expanded, you're going to maybe, in the next several months, have more space, but you're going to have the same number of nurses, because you haven't adjusted the operating moneys for the hospital. That is what we're facing today.

Today again you have another commission, the health restructuring commission, making another announcement. Duncan Sinclair is head of that commission. You know what he said in the media today: "Well, if the government doesn't reinvest like they say they're going to, we're going to have to slow down the restructuring." I'd like Duncan Sinclair to come to Windsor. I'd like him to come to Windsor to see that the government money that controls the business of our hospitals controls which services get closed and which stay open; that the government funding formula for hospitals is totally inadequate.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): Peterson closed the beds.

Mrs Pupatello: The member across the way wants to talk about closing beds. Let me tell you that today, because of the mismanagement of the health system in Ontario, you have gone forward —

The Acting Speaker: The member for Ottawa-Rideau.

Mrs Pupatello: I don't know why the member for Ottawa-Rideau wants to speak out. The Ottawa hospitals are in an absolute mess. I've talked to the Ottawa hospitals; I've talked to the people there. It's the same predicament that we told this House about in February 1997, through my private member's bill, which you will recall was passed in this House. In my private member's bill we called on several things: abolishment of the commission, because it was simply an arm of the government, it was simply your way to remove your poor decisions off to some other organization, because what really matters is who controls the money. So it's the same thing we predicted would happen in Windsor, that you would shut down the services because you're stopping the flow of money without reinvesting in community care, the new buzzwords "community care" and "home care."

What we know today is that this community access centre that you created, another bureaucracy that you created last year, is laying off staff.

1840

Why would they be laying off staff? They have more work to do, because you cut the hospital budget so that people are getting thrown out of hospital sooner, sent home, because supposedly there's going to be community care to take care of them. But as we're finding out, the

community care isn't there. The private member's bill in February 1997 told you that was going to happen. We warned you it would happen. The worst part about the health fiasco that's hit Ontario today is that it was entirely predictable. We saw it was coming, we told you it was coming and none of you did anything about it, even though seven of you in this House on the government side voted in favour of my resolution because in your own communities you saw the pattern and in your own communities your own residents called you, told you, petitioned you to vote in favour of that resolution. So we're talking about well over a year ago. By then we had already seen the bad effects of your policy in the Windsor area. Now it's spread like a bad weed right across the province.

So last week the Minister of Health trumpeted out a new announcement: \$225 million for all of Ontario, \$225 million across Ontario. We studied the announcement. Almost every aspect of that announcement was re-announcement. The same emergency room money that you itemize in this special line for Windsor Regional Hospital — I thought they might have done that just for my community — was the same money you have talked about three times. There's about \$55 million of it, and it's being offered up there like a piñata. Every hospital across Ontario now takes their stick and starts whacking away at this piñata in the hope that they are going to get some piece of it.

The health officials are busy rushing down now to the hospitals to say: "Now, let's plan. How can we offer you some help?" Hotel Dieu in Windsor and the Windsor Regional from Windsor have got to sit down and draw up yet another report, another application for some piece of this money, given the emergency crisis we're facing.

This morning on the answering machine of my constituency office I had a caller who used the pay phone from the emergency room to leave a message and say: "Where do I come to protest? We've been waiting with my family for hours in emergency." That was this past weekend, and this is the time that your health officials are trucking down the 401 to Windsor to say, "Let's see how you can put together a plan."

Put together a plan? We told you what the plan was. We told you three years ago. We told you in the private member's resolution from Windsor that you cannot cut operating budgets of hospitals without making your reinvestments first. Anyone who follows this issue says that what's so strange about it is that it makes perfect sense to do it in that order. If you don't want to see patients falling through the cracks, that is the order of things, if you insist on changing. Everybody agreed with you, but you fell down on your end of the bargain. Every one of you in this House on the government side is responsible yourself for what is currently happening in hospitals today in the Windsor area.

We've done everything we can do. We've sent you postcards, we've sent you petitions, we've written you letters, we've given questions in the House, we've given speeches on the issue, we've talked to you about how there weren't enough bays for an ambulance to drive in to

at the remaining sites because it hadn't been expanded. We explained all of this to you in fine detail, and the minister last week announced \$225 million for all of Ontario, the bulk of which was simply reannouncements.

There was a section in there that said \$1 million for retraining nurses. That would be wonderful. Would you like to come to my emergency rooms today and ask me which of our nurses are going to have the time and wherewithal to go and take that training? Where and at what time? We're losing our emergency nurses because they're giving up. They're far too stressed working in that environment. Anyone who has any study of the effect of stress over a long period of time knows that you have a significant body breakdown. That is today what is happening to the nurses in Windsor, because all of them are working too long and too hard.

When I sat in an emergency room at 2 o'clock in the morning and watched them, the nurses didn't have the time to take a bathroom break because there aren't enough of them and there were too many people in the hallway and just not enough hands on these patients to take care of them. The nurses finally are starting to speak up about this. Hospitals across Ontario have been loath to be negative about your policy, always because they were told in very explicit terms in the backrooms of this place at Queen's Park, "If you speak out, you will be the loser." It has taken this time for the situation in hospitals to become so severe that patients are finally starting to speak up, that patients are realizing they matter.

We released a health video in my town a couple of weeks ago. We had health professionals speaking to our constituents. A nurse on our video said, "It's a terrible situation to have to be here and feel like a failure because I can't give the kind of care that I know I'm supposed to give."

The situation in Sarnia is no different. We have cleanliness issues that we've come across, people complaining that they just don't have the level of staff they used to have. People just aren't getting the service they used to get.

This government says it's more efficient — more efficient for the people in Windsor even though they complain that the food is absolutely terrible because one of them has decided they're going to truck in frozen food. At some point you have to wonder, how far are you prepared to go to be efficient? The 93-year-old woman who's in the hallway because you don't have a bed, for how many hours — is that efficient? Is it efficient for you to leave the 93-year-old Windsorite in the hospital hallway because you want to be efficient? How much longer will every hospital in Ontario put up with that?

It isn't the hospital in the end that is facing the brunt of it; it's the patient and it's the patient's family.

We met Mr Lyle Browning, who ended up on a gurney in a hallway for hours, who was taken in after surgery and given all this medication because after that kind of surgical procedure he's got to have various bowel movements and all that before they move him. They didn't tell him that when they give him all this medication there wasn't

going to be a nurse to come and attend to him when he needed attention during the evening. He sat there on the gurney all night long, until the next day. In that hospital bed he witnessed how many seniors were being diapered because they don't have the nurses on the floor to care for these people like they should be cared for.

How many people in this room have seniors in their own family? I want you to substitute your parent, your grandparent, yourself for that individual and say, "That could be me diapered in a hallway, because we don't have enough nurses on staff on a shift to change them."

I don't know how much more graphic we need to get to tell you that the level of care is not acceptable. As Sister Emma Bezaire told us, it's not just, it's not acceptable, it's not fair. People like Lyle Browning, who's worked hard all his life, built a business, who is in his retirement years now, said the one thing you could look forward to in life was having your dignity. He said that in one fell swoop it was gone, and all he had to count on was his dignity.

I just want you to understand that those are the human effects of government policy from this Mike Harris government. This is the same Mike Harris who stood in this House under the throne speech trying to put on this kinder, gentler face to Ontario. On the front page of my Windsor Star the next day it was, "Oh, we realized we've made some errors in health care." These are not errors, members; these are the things that are a real travesty in health care in Ontario. They're happening in my community and Dalton McGuinty has advanced cases across Ontario where this is happening.

1850

Many hospitals across Ontario have made choices. This past year one of our hospitals chose to go into deficit. When you stand up in another week or two and announce your budget, you're going to talk about how much closer you're coming to balancing your budget. I want you to take a good look at your own community. I'd like you to look at Niagara Falls. I'd like you to look at Ottawa. I'd like you to look at Sarnia. I want you to go to your own backyard and look at hospital budgets. I'd like you to go to Scarborough. I want you to see if your hospital in your community totals \$300 million of debt load that the hospitals are now assuming.

What does that mean for the daily operating of a hospital when they're making choices? They refuse to cut certain services, because they know they have to provide the service to people in their community.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): Local hospital beds — we opened 39 beds.

Mrs Papatello: I don't think the members from Ottawa should be gloating. Considering the conditions occurring today in the Ottawa hospitals here in Ontario, the member for Nepean should know better. If he doesn't know, I think he should go back to his constituency, not just talking to people but really listening to people. That's what I have to say to the members who want to interject at this point. We currently have \$300 million of total debt load in hospitals. That means that in financing, the hospitals — never mind the worry they have to actually

produce the health service; they've got to go to their local bank, and they are facing financing charges. The cuts you have made to their operating budgets have been translated into a debt; their local boards themselves are facing the debt. So while you want to come out with a rosy picture on the wonderful job you have done on Ontario finances, you have just shoved it over to the hospitals.

We're going to have a look pretty soon at the municipalities and what you've done in the end with the cuts you have made. Are you going to include the reserve fund that the city of Mississauga has now eaten into because you cut them? Are you going to look at the debt being incurred by local cities and towns, the ones in your own backyard, because you cut them? Then I want you to come here on budget day and tell me how proud you are of the job you've done. I want you to say that you're proud of what you've done.

When you go back home when those assessments are completed and realize that your constituents are facing property tax increases because of your downloading of social services, welfare workfare, housing — they're paying on their property tax what you think you're saving — I want you to come back into this House after budget day and tell me how proud you are of the fabulous financing job you're doing for Ontario.

Do you honestly think people are stupid? Do you honestly think they have more than one pocket of money? No. We've heard time and time again that there's only one bank of money and it's all coming out of the same pocket, and our constituents are paying for it. Here in Ontario their hospitals are paying for it in their debt load. Their property taxes are going up, and they're paying for your downloading.

I think about the major initiatives of the government. Even if people agreed with what the government was doing, I want you to think about major initiatives and how successful they've been so far. Your biggest plank was workfare. The biggest thing you said you were going to do was workfare. If any one of you were to stand up today and say it was a success, it would be laughed out of the House because the thing has been a complete failure. The parliamentary assistant for community and social services knows this better than most. It is an absolute disaster. You haven't been successful in bringing through change in any measurable, successful way. You made your big mega-week announcements in January of last year and every one of them went through absolute upheaval and change. You did your downloading project. Then you had to upload it and then you downloaded again and then you uploaded it, and you're still talking about how exactly you're supposed to make this change. We have cities in Ontario today that still don't know what to do in terms of their own budgeting because they can't get information from this government.

In my city hall tonight — in three minutes the city council of Windsor is having their meeting. They're going to be talking about hostels. Hostels that were funded provincially were somehow completely left out of the ledger here, so the city of Windsor is saying: "This must

have been an error. It must have been an oversight, because no government could be this inept in its management." That's all we can say. All your major initiatives have been complete failures.

Your workfare plan, by the ministry's own numbers — let's just look at Metro Toronto. Let's look at exactly what you have. In Toronto, for example, there are 85,000 people on welfare and fewer than 100 of them in your supposed workfare plan; 85,000 and you have 100. I hope all those people who voted for you because of it are listening tonight. Out of 85,000 people you have 100 — an absolute botch-up. There can be no other description than that — a complete failure — because none of you thought through any of your mantra.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): The Titanic syndrome.

Mrs Papatello: My colleague from Sudbury calls it the Titanic syndrome. It's catching, I think, because everything you touch turns sour. Nothing you are doing seems to be working.

You introduced legislation. You sent it for hearings around Ontario. It couldn't receive support in North Bay, the Premier's home town. They said, "Workfare is the stupidest thing going because it doesn't work." We went through this public hearing process. You brought it back in the House for debate. You didn't make the significant changes that you were told time and time again you should make. What did you do? You passed the bill but the regulations weren't ready for months, so cities and towns didn't know how to interpret the bill because you didn't give them the detailed regulations they needed. Now you're bringing out regulations. Now you're finding out that it's not working.

The other day the Minister of Community and Social Services took a trip to Wisconsin, where they have a workfare program. Minister, don't you think you should have taken a trip to Wisconsin before you wrote the bill, before you went for hearings, before you brought it back for third reading, before you finally passed it and then wrote regulation?

Don't you think you should have gone to New York? If you went to New York, you would have seen in the state of New York scant evidence of jobs from workfare. We could have told you that what people need to get off the system is a job. They don't need to be cajoled and used as examples of the meanness of this government.

Interjection.

Mrs Papatello: Oh, absolutely you're going to fix the system. It's an absolute disaster, not to mention what you've done with support and custody — an absolute disaster. We still have people in our community who aren't getting funds that are legitimately theirs because of another foulup. Every major initiative by this government has been completely mismanaged.

I just want to say that I don't want the members here to be applauding on budget day, because you've moved debt from the Ontario government to the backs of the same Ontarians. The worst crime committed by this government is your complete botch-up of the health care system, which

has been felt in the Windsor area for a long time. The people of Windsor will remember how they've been treated by this government.

1900

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): It's always a pleasure to have an opportunity to speak during interim supply debate, because it enables us to stand back a little from individual situations and look at what the actual management technique of a government is and what is actually happening as a result of the kind of planning a government does.

It must be said that there have to be a lot of questions about the so-called ability of this government to manage. This is a government that prides itself on having set up business plans, increasing the demand for others to operate the way they do. But in fact it would be hard to find a successful business in this country that operated in the way that many of the government initiatives have been implemented.

Because the health situation is top of mind for most Ontarians, let's talk about the whole issue of health care and the implementation of the massive and sweeping changes this government has caused to occur. Not only has the government taken huge amounts of money out of the health care system in advance of the directives of the restructuring commission around how the restructuring should actually occur, the government has done even more than that. By taking that money out, they've made it extremely difficult for those health care facilities that have been ordered to make massive changes to carry out those changes.

The government says, "That's not a problem, because we've set aside \$2 billion to assist in health care restructuring." What they don't tell you is that only \$154 million of that \$2 billion has been flowed, and that was for retrospective staff settlements for all the fired staff that resulted out of the kind of restructuring that had to happen.

One of the really shocking issues of health care reform in this province is the loss of expertise, particularly among nurses, across the system because this government for two years drained millions of dollars out of the hospital system, forcing those hospitals to contract quite remarkably, forcing those hospitals to lay off many of their expert staff, and then of course incurring costs because many of these people would have been under contract. We all know that that is a hidden cost of so-called downsizing that makes itself felt very directly across the system.

When you are trying to accomplish something as massive as hospital restructuring in a province like Ontario, there are things you can do to make it a much more feasible program. One of those things, of course, is to reward those communities that participate willingly in the restructuring and are willing to carry out the directives that are given, and, where communities have been resistant, to use some of those financial levers to try to make them more cooperative.

It's really interesting that this government has taken exactly the opposite way of doing things. This government punishes those communities that have participated

willingly in restructuring and rewards those who have resisted and who have refused to carry out directives. What a message for a government that claims to have all the answers to how you get communities to, in the words of the member for London South, "buy into the program."

It's really quite distressing for communities like London in particular, where I come from, that never fought the restructuring commission, that responded as a group of hospitals together not that they couldn't do something but with how they could do the kinds of changes. Even though that meant the loss of acute care in one of our major hospitals, even though that meant the loss of an emergency department, even though it meant the loss of two psychiatric hospitals, even though it meant a reduction in the number of acute care beds and mental health beds, we had a community that was on board and willing to participate with restructuring.

What does the government do? It takes \$56 million away from a community that was required or estimated by the restructuring commission to be able to save, after all the changes were done, \$40 million. Not only that, but now the Ministry of Health says, "Well, we're not sure the restructuring commission had the numbers right, and we as the ministry are going to redo those numbers." So London continues to be trying to manage this huge restructuring with \$24 million less than it needs to have.

Or a community like Sault Ste Marie: Sault Ste Marie is a community that has a lot of difficulties in terms of attracting and keeping physicians, as many of the northern communities do. Sault Ste Marie, recognizing that it wasn't going to be possible to keep two hospitals going unless there were a rejigging of the services, unless they figured out what to do about governance, had the foresight to move forward to one management of their two hospitals, maintaining two boards so that they wouldn't get into the dispute around Catholic governance of their Catholic hospital and moving ahead to change the services so they would be concentrated in logical places. But the Ministry of Health, because they went ahead with that voluntarily before the restructuring commission came to town, tells Sault Ste Marie they aren't eligible for any of those restructuring funds. In fact, it is not clear, as it wasn't clear in Windsor, which also went ahead with restructuring prior to the restructuring commission, that they would be permitted to go ahead with the plans that the community had already done. So not only are they out the dollars even though they are saving money because of the changes they made, but they don't even have the assurance that the changes they have made are going to be recognized as either appropriate or sufficient by the restructuring commission when it finally comes around to coming to town.

This is particularly pertinent to interim supply, because as we sit here tonight, as we know, the government continues to spend money. The members over there are fond of ticking away and talking about what it costs in the debt load per hour, but we all know it costs a great deal per hour to run the services in our province. We have excellent services in our province that we've built over

many years, and of course it costs tax dollars to run those services. But when we talk about voting an interim supply to the government, talk about flowing those dollars, giving the government permission to flow those dollars, it's appropriate for us to be asking questions about the priorities of the government, about the policies of the government.

My colleagues from the London area, in this current dispute with the hospitals, keep saying it's not the minister's fault or the government's fault; it's the bureaucrats' fault. Somehow they can't seem to get the bureaucrats to do their will. We all know that bureaucratic structures are very difficult to work with sometimes; that's true. Certainly those of us who have experience in government know that the Ministry of Health is notorious in terms of its independent actions and its belief that it ought to be making all the decisions no matter who is the government of the day. But the reality is that a government that is creating such massive change in our health care system can't afford to sit back and let that be disrupted.

As I said to my colleagues the other day, who's in charge here? Who is in charge? If this government is really in charge, why is it not making sure that those who wish to go forward and who are doing everything they can to go forward with restructuring get rewarded?

Instead, we see a change in direction. In the Thunder Bay community, which has resisted the restructuring, has insisted on a whole different way of organizing things, we see a redirection so that in fact what the community wishes to do, it is going to be allowed to do: no more money, but it is going to be allowed to do what it wants. The message to us in London is that the government is allowing, first of all, its bureaucracy and its restructuring commission to completely ignore the realities of how you never change in a community.

It's interesting that when we talk about money, and particularly if we talk about money in the health care system, the government says, "You can't criticize us in terms of health care because we're spending more on health care than anybody has ever spent before," and they keep trotting out this \$18.4 billion. The trouble is, they aren't flowing \$18.4 billion. They're announcing and reannouncing and reannouncing dollars without flowing them.

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Let me give you an example. The CCACs that this government created across the province are for the most part staggering under the demands that have been created for them. They are trying to deal with budgets that were designed to deal with long-term-care reform, designed to deal with those who have long-term health care needs and who require assistance within the community either by being placed in facilities or in the home care area. But because the government, through its budgets, has taken so much money out of hospitals ahead of the creation of these so-called subacute hospital beds, ahead of the kind of investment into the community that would allow subacute care to happen in the home, a 20% to 30% increase in the

load on CCACs has occurred in absolutely every area of the province, without additional money.

Oh, yes, the government announced, announced and announced that there were going to be \$170 million spent over two years. That was announced in 1996. But it's really interesting, when we went through the public accounts committee, how much of that money went out. Actually, \$4 million was reduced. None of the \$170 million went out. The public accounts show that in fact there was a \$4-million reduction in the CCACs.

This government, when they began to listen to the polls and began to realize how totally fed up the people of Ontario were getting with them and their rhetoric, their promises that aren't translating into care in the community, what did they do? They sent their minister without portfolio for seniors out to do little investigations at each CCAC and they cash-managed. They sent out one-time money to try to keep the CCACs, their boards of directors and their clients quiet, to try to put a little damper on the problem, to try and pretend they were being responsive to need: one-time money, not base funding to deal with what we know is an ongoing growth, but throwing a little money at it to quiet people down. This is not good management. This is what this government complained about with other governments. It's doing exactly the same thing.

Let me read a copy of the letter to the minister from the Ottawa-Carleton community care access centre. I'm sure the member for Nepean will be interested. It reads:

"As you know, the Community Resource Centre of Goulbourn, Kanata and West Carleton is very concerned about the adequacy of funding of visiting nurses and home care services being provided by Ottawa-Carleton's community care access centre to our clients. Last year, in recognition of the increase in demand for these services, you provided the CCAC with \$3 million in one-time funding to meet the needs of our clients and others for home care, for which we are grateful. Today we are writing to ask you to convert the \$3 million you gave to the CCAC into permanent funding for home care in Ottawa-Carleton, so that the current need for home care services for our clients can continue to be met. In addition, we are also asking that you provide additional funds for home care services in Ottawa-Carleton for 1998-99," beyond that \$3 million that they got last year but they don't know whether they're going to get this year, "in order to ensure that the CCAC will be able to meet the expected increase in caseload, as a result of both the effects of hospital restructuring and an aging population here in Ottawa-Carleton."

Mr Speaker, that letter could have been written by the president of the community board of any community care access centre in the province. It's just the dollar amount that changes. Every single one of these centres that is mature enough to be actually delivering services is staggering under the burden of an inadequate budget. Yet that \$170 million wasn't flowed, and it shows up as only \$100 million in the estimates for last year. We have no idea how much has flowed, and we won't until the public accounts come out. That is what is happening all the way

along the line with this government: great, big announcements of how it is meeting the needs of the people of Ontario, and no money flowing to match those announcements.

The Minister of Health and the minister responsible for seniors had the nerve to go out throughout March of this year reannouncing money that they had already announced the year before, reannouncing and reannouncing, and many of the so-called recipients have yet to see a penny. Yet this government is trying to create an impression that they are meeting the needs of people. They are trying to create an impression that they are actually listening.

That impression doesn't go very far for anybody who has had to deal with themselves or a family member or a friend who has needed the health care system over the last little while. It is a disgrace that this government continues to play this game of smoke and mirrors, to claim to be spending dollars on health care that we clearly know from the public accounts they didn't spend when they announced it the first time around, and we have no assurance that they'll spend it this time around.

How about another example? There's not very much that was good about the agreement this government reached with the Ontario Medical Association, because in fact what it did was cave in to the demands of physicians who wanted very much to maintain a fee-for-service system and who wanted to ensure that there was no mechanism whereby the government could force them to obey the cap that was on their fee. We all know, because it's been in all the papers, that they didn't meet the cap. In fact, the last I heard they were about \$120 million over the cap. That means, of course, that if they are going to be paid, the dollars have to come from other places in the health care system.

But there was one good thing at least in that agreement with the physicians, and that thing was a special pot of money set aside, \$36.4 million, which was supposed to go to fund what we call globally funded group practices in areas that were hard to serve, areas that have been underserved for a long time, where a complement of physicians able to care for the population 24 hours a day, seven days a week didn't exist. There were good proposals from underserved communities, certainly across the north, and the Professional Association of Internes and Residents of Ontario did a survey in southwestern Ontario which showed there would have been good acceptance of globally funded group practices in the underserved areas in southwestern Ontario. Many, many negotiations, and what happened? Precisely nothing, except a lot of talk, and there were a couple of reasons for that.

This was supposed to be a special pot of money. Everybody understands that when you're going to take money out of the fee-for-service system, the OMA objects to it. We all know that. So this was supposed to be a special pot of money set aside particularly for this purpose. Well, now we're starting to hear that in fact that wasn't a special pot of money; it was out of the fee-for-service money. That's the first thing guaranteed to make sure the OMA would

continue to oppose a plan to set up globally funded group practices.

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The second piece of it is that these out-of-control bureaucrats the minister can't seem to get under control first of all said that the money was one-time only, not for the course of the agreement, which certainly wasn't the agreement I read, and second, this claim that yes, it wasn't a special pot and therefore it was subject to further negotiation with the OMA.

So \$36.4 million wasn't spent on globally funded group practices. Now, it may have been spent to pay for some of that overrun of the fee-for-service doctors, but it certainly wasn't spent on globally funded group practices. Communities throughout Ontario continue to be underserved when there are young, well-trained, eager physicians wanting to go as long as the group practice idea is put in place, to enable them to have the sufficient resources to actually provide the service — a real tragedy.

If that money wasn't spent on the fee-for-service area, then of course it got put back into the pot, which is just as tragic because the government keeps saying, "Oh no, the money's there." Is the money there last year's plus this year's? I doubt it. It may indeed be the second and third year of the agreement that the dollars have been set aside for, but we have no assurance that they're going to be spent.

Another example is community mental health. People across this province are telling — certainly telling the member for Scarborough Centre, who has been doing the study on mental health reform — all over the province are being very clear about the need to flow money to community mental health.

What did we see in the public accounts last year? Thirty million dollars underspent in community mental health, \$30 million in the estimates allocated for community mental health not spent. What was the excuse? "We couldn't get it out the door." Those of us who have been around here for a long time know that government bureaucrats always claim they can't get the money out the door and they'll do better next year. But the problem is that the problems out there in our communities mount up over time.

We have a government determined to get out of the business of providing mental health services to the patients who need them in this province. We've seen them agree — they didn't need to agree because it could only be advice from the restructuring commission since they weren't public hospitals — to divest themselves of in-hospital mental health services. But did they agree to the advice that all of those dollars would be put into the community? No, they haven't; and we haven't seen any of those dollars flow, nor have we seen what was already in the estimates flow.

So when a government comes looking for interim supply, it needs to know that these are the kinds of issues that are going to be raised, that they are legitimate concerns of the people of this province. They deserve to know whether (a) their government even knows what

they're doing; (b) whether the dollars are being spent where the government says they're going to be spent; and (c) whether the government can actually manage both the finances and the services it purports to offer.

Mr Baird: I am pleased to rise and have the opportunity to speak to the motion for interim supply for a number of reasons. The interim supply motion gives members an opportunity to review the economic performance of the government, an opportunity that those of us on this on this side of the House always welcome because job creation, economic growth, taxation and debt reduction are all key priorities for middle-class families, particularly in my riding of Nepean.

But if I could, maybe at the outset of my remarks, say this bill will also allow for many of our law enforcement agencies to be funded, from the parole board through the strict discipline facilities. I did want to say at the outset how very proud I am to serve in a caucus and a government with the Honourable Bob Runciman, someone with a tremendous amount of class, a tremendous amount of integrity, someone with honesty just above and beyond the vast majority of folks in Ontario. He has made a tremendous contribution to the security of this province. I am very privileged to call him a friend.

Let's look at the Ontario economy.

"Ontario's economy became red hot in 1997 and is likely to remain so through 1998, growing at a 5% pace in both years," the Bank of Montreal said.

"The significant decline in the vacancy rate is a strong indicator that we are entering a long-term development cycle," Royal LePage said with respect to the increase in demand for office space in Toronto.

The Royal Bank stated, "As Canada's leading engine of job growth, it's great to hear that most small business owners and operators are bullish about 1998."

We had pre-budget consultations at the standing committee on finance and economic affairs and were able to hear from Dr Sherry Cooper, senior vice-president and chief economist, who came before the committee as an expert witness of one of the largest financial institutions in Ontario. She came before the committee and cited a whole host of reasons why the Ontario economy was growing. I'd like to go over that. She said, "Growth prospects in Ontario continue to be stellar," and one of the reasons cited for that evaluation was the tax cut.

She continued: "This is a reflection of the multi-year easing in monetary policy, the provincial tax cut and the shift to a more business-friendly economic environment...."

She went on: "In my view, full marks go to the Ontario government for its pro-investment initiative.... public policy shifts in Ontario have also contributed to the rebound in economic activity.... the income-supporting impact from the tax cuts have paved the way for a broad-based economic expansion of a kind not seen in nearly a decade.

"The personal income tax cuts, while delaying the move to fiscal balance, have gone a long way towards reviving consumer confidence and spending. The most

recent data show that Ontario's retail sales were on track for almost 7% growth in 1997, compared with virtually no growth in 1996. The tax cuts are working."

Those aren't John Baird's words. Those aren't the government's words. Those are the words of Dr Sherry Cooper, who was asked to appear before the committee as an expert witness.

She cites five reasons for the underpinnings to Ontario's growth. Much you would expect — interest rates, the link to the American markets, the Canadian dollar situation, the automotive sector — but of the five reasons, number 5 is, "The pro-business stance of the Ontario government will continue to play an integral role in attracting business from other jurisdictions. This is evident in the upswing in absorption rates in the office sector, taking the commercial vacancy rate for class A space in downtown Toronto to a mere 5%. This compares to double-digit vacancy rates just one year ago."

I could go on. "The Ontario government deserves credit for maintaining its commitment to budgetary reform, effectively breaking the tax-and-spend grip on the fiscal landscape of the late 1980s and early 1990s." I agree with Dr Cooper in this regard.

When we came into office almost three years ago, we immediately started down the road to fulfilling our campaign commitments, unlike the two previous governments which put aside their campaign commitments shortly after being sworn in to office. These commitments were made in response to 10 years of fiscal mismanagement and outdated ideas. While other jurisdictions, both in Canada and around the world, were lowering their deficits, welcoming business and modernizing their health and education system, Ontario was going in the other direction. The Liberals and NDP would sit around the cabinet table and dream up new schemes to create jobs. One would say, "Tax," the other would say, "Spend," and we regrettably saw the results.

As we promised, provincial income tax is being reduced by 30%. We have reduced the size of government and are providing better services for less money, and we are well on our way to balancing the budget. We have eliminated the barriers to job creation, investment and economic growth. For the year 1997, the Ontario economy recorded its strongest growth of the decade, with real GDP rising at a rate of 4.8%.

In March 1998, Ontario's total employment rose by 3,300, following a 35,400-job gain in February — impressive indeed. The Ontario unemployment rate continues to decline, falling to 7.4% in March. We on this side of the House are not satisfied with that. We're going to work harder to ensure that we can create an economy that will create more jobs for people in Ontario.

Ontario international merchandise exports rose 8.8% in January 1998. Look at my own riding of Nepean. Nortel at this moment is undergoing a quarter-billion-dollar economic expansion — 5,000 new jobs.

I look at some clippings from the Ottawa Sun: "Tech Boom Triggers New Development." "The local economy got more good news yesterday as Nepean announced an

incredible 365% jump in the total value of building permits issued during the first quarter."

I know this is bad news for our colleagues on the other side of the House. They don't want to hear about the good news going on back home. But I'm going to continue.

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"Buoyed by the region's high-tech giants, the sector jumped to \$45.4 million from a mere \$1.5 million in the first quarter of 1997," one Nepean official said.

"The commercial sector also boasted staggering improvement with a jump to \$8.9 million from last year's \$2.5 million. The residential sector showed a more modest gain, rising to \$8.9 million..." This is very good news indeed.

"If the first quarter is any indication, 1998 promises to be a very prosperous year for new business starts, job creation and assessment growth." Who said that? Not John Baird; Jack Stirling, the city of Nepean's commissioner of planning and development.

In fact the Ottawa Sun, in a story by Simon Tuck, said that "what is now becoming Canada's second-hottest market behind only Calgary" is my constituency of Nepean. That's good news not just for the folks who are able to get the high-tech jobs but for the spinoffs in retail and construction and the home-building industry. That's good news indeed for the entire economy of Ontario.

Business confidence in the province continues to rise. Private sector economists are optimistic that the Ontario economy will remain strong in 1998. The average private sector forecast for Ontario real GDP growth is more than 4% for 1998. All private sector forecasters expect Ontario to grow faster than the Canadian average in 1998.

You've got to wonder. The federal government's policies are so successful and the economic boom going on south of the border is so successful. We're not seeing that in British Columbia, we're not seeing that in the Quebec, we're not seeing that in three of the four maritime provinces, but we are seeing it here in Ontario.

The federal government's, Statistics Canada's Business Conditions Survey reports that Canadian manufacturers expect to increase employment hiring in the first quarter of 1998, and production levels are expected to rise again.

A recent Royal Bank-Angus Reid study shows that Ontario's small business owners are optimistic compared to those in other provinces. Again, if it's happening in other jurisdictions, whether it's the federal government or the US economy, why is it being felt in other jurisdictions? The Angus Reid poll found that among small business owners 56% expect improved business conditions in 1998. That is indeed good news because we on this side of the House know that small business is the economic engine of this province and we've got to support small business to see it create jobs.

Following years of economic uncertainty and pessimism, Ontario citizens have become optimistic about their financial future. An Angus Reid poll showed that consumer confidence in Ontario was high in early 1998: 44% of the people of Ontario, according to this poll, expect the Ontario economy to improve in 1998.

Just three short years ago, as you and I know, Mr Speaker, as we knocked on doors in Ottawa-Carleton we found not that unemployment was the biggest concern among voters but that it was bigger than that. It was the lack of hope and lack of confidence in the future. Parents were worried about the opportunities for their children who are students. Far too many were worried about losing their jobs and weren't spending. So the question of unemployment was far bigger than that. It was a big issue, and for the constituency of my colleague the member for Niagara Falls as well.

Increased employment opportunities and lower provincial income taxes have made Ontarians feel more secure, and as a result they're digging down in their pockets and spending more of their own hard-earned tax dollars.

For 1997, department store sales in Ontario rose by 11.2%, the strongest annual gain on record. Over the first two months of 1998, unit auto sales in Ontario were up by 4.9% from the same period a year ago. In March 1998, Ontario housing starts jumped by 23.6%, to reach an annualized level of 70,100. This represents the highest level in starts since March 1990.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp stated, "Consumer optimism created in an environment of strong job creation will sustain the demand for both new and resale homes." The CMHC forecasts housing starts will jump by 10% in 1998, which is unbelievable compared to the solid growth that occurred in the Ontario economy last year.

As promised, we're on track to eliminating our deficit by the year 2000-01. In 1996-97, for a second year in a row, we exceeded our deficit target — no excuses, no blame game; the targets were set and they were met. That is extremely important, because we simply can't afford to spend in the next generation's name. Every year, year after year, this government has made its deficit reduction target, something that is essential for business confidence and investment confidence around the world. The deficit has fallen to \$5.2 billion, from a high of \$11.3 billion inherited from the previous government in June 1995. That's a decrease of more than 50%.

Mrs Boyd: There wouldn't have been any deficit without a tax cut.

Mr Baird: One of the members opposite said it would have been decreased by a lot more if we had not had the tax cut. You know what? If we told the unemployed, "Step aside, you can wait. We're going to balance the budget first. We're not going to tackle unemployment; we're not going to tackle consumer confidence; we're not going to tackle for those families who are struggling to meet their mortgage payments," if we told them to simply wait, that balancing the budget would be more important, indeed we might have been able to balance the budget. But that would have been unconscionable, to simply tell the unemployed in Ontario, "You'll have to wait three, four or five years."

That's why we targeted job creation and economic growth as a solid priority, and that's why we've seen that

in the last 11 months more jobs have been created in the private sector in the province of Ontario than in any 12-month period since Confederation, ever. That's a lot of good economic news. And it hasn't been the government buying those jobs; it's been hardworking Ontarians and small business people and others making investment decisions, investing in Ontario and creating those jobs.

There are other economic arguments where we can disagree. I know that my colleagues in the New Democratic Party respectfully disagree on the issue of mandatory work for welfare. You know what? I respect that position, because they've always disagreed with it; they've said they believe it's wrong. I respect them for that position because they only have one position. But the Liberal Party campaigned in the last election saying, "We're going to bring in mandatory work for welfare." What was it called?

Interjection: Mandatory opportunity.

Mr Baird: "Mandatory opportunity." Now we've got the sight of Dalton McGuinty going around the province promising that a Dalton McGuinty government will immediately get rid of mandatory work for welfare. Also, because he is totally against the welfare reductions, we know that one of the first things Dalton McGuinty is going to do is go back to the old way and jack up welfare rates by 21.6%.

We on this side of the House disagree with that approach. We on this side of the House believe that mandatory work-for-welfare programs are good for the Ontario economy, that they give people a sense of hope for the future that they can get some experience and get a reference to put on that next job application. That's very important, so work for welfare will continue to be part of this supply motion because our welfare costs in the province of Ontario will continue to come down as more people leave workfare and go into the labour force and get a job and work and contribute, get the dignity of earning their own salaries and being contributors to our society. That's good news.

I know the Liberals want to get rid of mandatory work for welfare and go back to the past. We know that. They've been very clear on that. If I'm wrong, if there's any misunderstanding, I invite my colleague the member for Ottawa West or the member from Sudbury to stand up right now and correct me if they don't want to get rid of mandatory work for welfare.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, member for Sudbury East.

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Mr Baird: I will echo the comments made by one of my colleagues that yes, we are increasing health care spending to more than \$18 billion a year in Ontario. The member for Windsor-Sandwich asked why I don't go back home and check out the hospitals in Nepean. Well, I have a clipping here: "Local Hospitals Reopen 39 Beds." We got back the beds that Peterson closed in the 1980s, and that's good news. In Elizabeth Witmer we have a Minister of Health who is sympathetic to the important

and urgent needs in our emergency wards and in long-term care.

The member for Ottawa-Rideau and I have been fighting to try and get those beds that Peterson closed back in the 1980s and we finally are starting to get them back. That's good news.

Interjection.

Mr Guzzo: She knows who Hitler is but she doesn't know who Peterson is.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Ottawa-Rideau.

Mr Baird: "We've opened an additional 26 beds," the Ottawa Civic site operating officer Wendy Nicklin said. Queensway-Carleton Hospital president Rob Devitt hailed the announcement as good news."

We know that as we continue to move forward with health care reform, being careful to listen on the way to ensure that we get it right, as it said last week in the throne speech, long-term care will be a real priority, and that's good news.

Our government is the first government in Ontario in recent years to have the political courage to reinvest those administrative savings spent on administration back into front-line patient care, and that's good news.

We've made a firm commitment that we will ensure that health care priorities are met before restructuring goes into effect. I was pleased, as from the recent example, that my colleague the Honourable Elizabeth Witmer, the Minister of Health, committed up to \$225 million to address the recommendations of the emergency services working group to improve emergency room services. She didn't order a report done and have the report gather dust on the shelf. She got the report back and the government moved that day to follow through to ensure that the health care needs of the people of Ontario were being met. That's a very direct result of listening to the people of Ontario.

People know that issues this government is trying to solve are complex. They know they're not easy. They know that sometimes some decisions are tough ones to take. But a recent Angus Reid poll said that 60% of Ontarians agree with the government's direction, that we must continue to make the priorities we outlined in our first and second throne speeches the priority: job creation; economic growth; helping small business be lifted out from under a mountain of red tape and regulation; making health care a real priority; making the education of our next generation important. We've actually increased the funding to classroom education. The first thing that some education administrators said around the province was, "Could we take some of the money from the classroom and put it back into administration?" and Dave Johnson said no, you couldn't take money from the classroom to spend more on administration. That is a real priority.

Also, we've had to look at dealing with the incredible mess of the deficit, and that too is going very well. It will be eliminated by the year 2000-01, as promised.

Those commitments remain our priority, as is strengthening work for welfare. I was saying to the member for Ottawa-Rideau the other day that if we can continue getting mandatory work for welfare up and running,

maybe we could convince Dalton McGuinty it was a good thing so he wouldn't promise to get rid of it. That will continue to be a priority for the government, and we will continue to work on job creation, on economic growth, on helping small business, on work for welfare and building a better Ontario economy.

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): It has been rather interesting to listen to the inventive fiction that comes from the other side. I think those watching the debate tonight must wonder what it is we're talking about. Of course we're talking about a motion with respect to supply, that the Minister of Finance be authorized to pay the salaries of the civil servants and other necessary payments pending the voting of supply for the period commencing May 1, 1998, and ending October 31, 1998. We're talking about the expenditures of this government for the next six months.

When we talk about the expenditures of the government, of course we know that we're talking about something on the order of \$56 billion, according to the third-quarter financial report of this government, of which only about \$42.6 billion actually goes towards programs. We do find, however, that there's a \$9-billion payment on public debt interest and that this government, despite all the brave words on the other side, continues to run a deficit of about \$5.2 billion.

I think it's important for people to realize just what is happening here when the government comes in with this motion of supply and talks the brave talk about the financial figures or the financial measures it has brought to Ontario. It claims all kinds of credit for this, that and the other, yet, as you will find out from my comments, there is a real cost, a real human cost being incurred in Ontario as a result of this government's fiscal agenda. It's a fiscal agenda that Ontarians really, when you look at it, when you look at the polls, when you ask the people on the street, do not support.

To draw to your attention just what it is we're talking about here, this is a government that came in in 1995 facing a deficit of about \$8.8 billion and facing expenditures of about \$58.3 billion, and over the course of their mandate to date they have been able to bring that down to about \$56 billion. I just outlined that about \$9 billion of it or more deals with public interest debt. The revenues have gone up from \$49.5 billion to about \$51 billion or so, but the fact is that they're continuing to run a deficit. It's rather amazing that here we have the Harris government, supposedly the deficit fighter, adding about \$21 billion to our deficit to date.

As a matter of fact, it's interesting to note that Ontario took 118 years to accumulate a debt of about \$30 billion. That was 118 years, right through to the end of the Peterson regime, to accumulate a debt of about \$30 billion. That wasn't all that long ago. I believe the member for Nepean was still in school at that time, but he can remember those days. Under the Peterson regime, which was a Liberal government, the debt increased about \$9 billion over those five years, and under the Rae government, another five years, a further \$49 billion. But

here we have the Harris government running a deficit year after year. Remember, we're talking about a supply motion that's going to be spending taxpayers' dollars to support programs, to run a deficit.

Why is this government continuing to run a deficit? It's because it continues to insist, at the same time, to try and cut income taxes. I say this because in the speech from the throne, one of the few lines I can read out, there is a line that "this government is going to stay the course." It will stay the course. In other words, it's going to continue with a fiscal agenda that even the banks, even the investment houses, even the bond rating agencies suggest is not financially very sound. Why is this? It's because this income tax cut is costing us money today.

In 1996-97 the income tax cut under this government cost about \$1.2 billion in lost revenues, revenues that would have gone towards maintaining our hospitals, maintaining our schools, ensuring that we had an adequate social infrastructure in place, putting money into training, something this government still refuses to do — this is amazing — in its negotiations with the federal government. However, it cost in 1996-97 \$1.2 billion; in 1997-98 \$3.3 billion; in 1998-99 \$4.7 billion, and we expect, if they continue — and we hear them say they're going to stay the course — another \$5.6 billion. What does this mean? This means that in staying the course, this government is committed to more and more and more cuts.

Let's recall all of this. Here we have a government that said it's going to increase our deficit even further, but we must cut the deficit, yet at the same time it's going to cut income tax. How is it going to finance all this? It's going to cut programs.

Let's just remember, shall we, what this government said when it came to power. What did it say it was going to cut? Well, it was going to reduce the size of government.

But what did it say about health care? What did this government say? What did Mike Harris, the leader of this government, say about health care? During the election campaign in 1995, Mike Harris said, "Not one cent will be cut from health care" — Mike Harris, May 3, 1995. What has this government done? Some \$800 million has been cut from hospital budgets. Can you believe that? Eight hundred million dollars. Here we have the member for Nepean crowing about 39 new beds going back into Ottawa-Carleton, but what did they take out of the community in terms of hospital budgets? They took \$800 million, and when you add in the other cuts to health care during the mandate of this government to date, they have taken \$1.4 billion out of our system.

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You have to ask yourself, how can the government on one side say they're spending more money than ever before in health care and yet on the other side — the black and white of it; you can find it in the auditor's report — they've taken this money out? Quite frankly, we all know the answer. We have a growing population. We have an aging population. Our health care needs are growing. We find ourselves with longer and longer waiting lists. Does

this government listen to that? No, indeed it does not. It will stay the course. It is proud to say that it will stay the course.

Hospital closures: What did the government promise again? Of course during the campaign, the leaders' televised debate, we had the question coming from the journalists, broadcast all over Ontario, "Can you guarantee us tonight that your pledge to protect health care will mean that you, Mr Harris, will not close hospitals?"

What did Mike Harris, leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, say at that time? "Certainly I can guarantee you, Robert" — you know, with those blue eyes staring into the cameras, staring with sincerity — "that it is not my plan to close hospitals." Yet here we stand today with 32 hospitals named for closure and more to come yet.

All we can say here is that these cuts have to be made so that this government can meet its fiscal agenda of finding the money for an income tax cut that Ontarians would much rather not have. They would much rather keep their health care system, keep their hospitals, keep the education system that they know they need for their children.

User fees: Remember, we're speaking in the context of an expenditure plan for this government to take them through the next six months. What is it premised on? It's premised on a fiscal agenda that's going to find money, more cuts, to pay for an income tax cut that is going to benefit whom? Certainly not the average Ontarian.

Mike Harris, in his famous Common Sense Revolution, which all those members opposite had to sign an oath of allegiance they were going to uphold — remember, they are going to stay the course in this thing; in their own speech they have affirmed they're going to stay the course. "Under this plan, there will be NO new user fees" — Mike Harris, Common Sense Revolution.

Indeed, what is the reality? Some \$225 million in new user fees for seniors and the poor who purchase medication through the Ontario drug benefit plan, thousands of new user fees for provincial and municipal government services, and I will touch upon the costs of downloading in a moment.

I've only gone through three broken promises so far. There is more to come. I have to tell you this.

Law enforcement: One would think the Progressive Conservative Party, being the kind of Reform Party in blue clothing that it is, would be a law-and-order party. As a matter of fact, they even speak of crime prevention in this speech from the throne. "Funding for law enforcement and justice will be guaranteed.... [A]ny savings we find in our justice system through greater efficiencies will be reinvested to ensure public safety in our streets and in our homes," said Mike Harris in the Common Sense Revolution.

What has happened? Some \$215 million being cut from the ministry of justice budgets, including \$88 million from justice services, \$23 million in court administration, \$8 million in legal services to the crown. Even in the community that the previous speaker, the member for Nepean, comes from, the police budget there was cut by

\$8 million by this provincial government. The money that was going from the provincial government to the Ottawa-Carleton Regional Police commission was eliminated, \$8 million. Who's going to make up the difference? It's going to come out of one pocket into the other. You can't tell me, when we're dealing with police, when over 80% of their costs are salary costs, that it's not going to have an impact on service on the street.

Agriculture: One, two, three, four, five. I'm on my fifth item here. What did Mike Harris say as part of his Task Force on Rural Development in 1994? No cuts for agriculture. Yet what happens under this government? Agriculture budget cuts of \$45 million, including \$23 million in cuts to policy and farm finance, \$10 million in cuts to education, research and labs, \$11 million in cuts to food industry and development.

What did we hear just last week? There were so many Conservatives at the Ontario farmers' association's little gathering downstairs in the legislative dining room, and they said, "We have to have those funds cut from the budget, which this government has done, reinvested." I think there was kind of an "or else," and when we hear the farmers in Ontario saying, "We can't take these cuts; we have an industry that needs service here. We didn't expect you to cut this. You promised not to cut this," but this government does so — well. That was only the fifth item.

I move on: seniors and the disabled. Again, Mike Harris, in that famous Common Sense Revolution — and I say this because we're dealing with the expenditure plan of this government, we're dealing with a motion of supply that will allocate where the taxpayers' dollars are going to go for the next six months, and it's important to know that in order for them to meet their fiscal agenda, they still have to dig out more money from these programs, not just simply to deal with the needs for the community, but they have to dig out money from these programs to finance that income tax cut with which we've only gone partway along, and we expect in the next couple of weeks to hear that the government is going to be committed to yet advancing the full stage of that cut. But as I have already outlined to you, health care, hospital closures, user fees, law enforcement, agriculture — cut after cut after cut, promise after promise after promise broken by this government.

Seniors and the disabled: "Aid for seniors and the disabled will not be cut." Mike Harris's Common Sense Revolution. And what has this government done? Some \$225 million in new user fees for seniors and the disabled who have purchased medication through the Ontario drug benefit plan. Does this sound to you as if indeed the programs for seniors have remained — shall I dare use the word? — revenue-neutral? Such a word.

The environment: Mike Harris telling the Toronto Star on June 5, 1995, with those sincere blue eyes — you've got to remember those sincere blue eyes when you see those infomercials and he's looking into the camera and he's telling everybody what he truly believes in — "I don't think you'll find a cent there cut out of the environ-

ment. We were able to find \$6 billion in cuts without cutting the environment."

What is the reality? Ministry of Environment and Energy budget cuts over \$121 million, 42% of the budget. In the one area where people in Ontario think we should be investing more, which is protecting our environment, what does this government do?

Why does this government do this? Because it has to find money for that income tax cut in order to follow through with its fiscal agenda. Does this make sense? If this money stayed in place, we would be out of a deficit situation today. We would have more money to put into the areas where we have need. This government is not listening to the public when it says: "Don't cut our hospitals any more. Don't cut our health care services any more." But what's in store?

Let's talk about education. The Common Sense Revolution: "Classroom funding for education will be guaranteed." What happens instead? Over the course of the mandate of this government to date, \$1 billion has been taken out of education, forcing 23 school boards to cancel junior kindergarten classes, and the government has the gall to announce that it's going to appoint Dr Fraser Mustard to look into early childhood education. My heavens. If it only listened to the school boards, to the parents, to the teachers, but this government does not listen. As a matter of fact, I heard the Premier say that school boards and teachers ought not to be trusted with the future of our children, throwing into complete mockery the democratic tradition we have had in this province even predating Confederation, where school board trustees were elected from their communities and sought to meet the needs of their communities. They may not be in the world's greatest respect in terms of what taxpayers believe these days because of the propaganda this government has put forward, but you have to ask yourself, when this government says in the Common Sense Revolution that classroom funding for education will be guaranteed, yet we find 23 school boards cutting junior kindergarten classes, when we find 53 school boards reducing special education programs, when we find 21 school boards scaling back or cancelling adult education, how can anyone say that this is a promise kept? It's not.

Even the new funding formula, which the member for Nepean seems to think is a wonderful thing, is going to mean that programs are going to be cut in Ottawa-Carleton, in the city of Nepean, the city of Ottawa, the city of Gloucester, the city of Kanata, the city of Cumberland. All those communities are going to see cuts in their programs.

Adult education: Here you have a person who has dropped out of school for whatever reason growing up to be an adult, realizing the need to get a full high school education, wanting to go back, and here is a government supposedly committed to providing them with those opportunities, and yet it takes the money away. Why? Why are they taking that money away? To finance an income tax cut, again another income tax cut.

2000

Post-secondary education: Mike Harris, in his document *A Blueprint for Learning in Ontario*, wrote all these things. Was he looking for election at the time? I think so. Was he trying to reach out to voters at the time? I think so. Was he trying to say, "Trust me and I'll do these things"? I think so. What did he say? "Tuition fees should be allowed to rise, over a four-year period, to 25% of operating costs." What is the reality? Some \$400 million in cuts to post-secondary education have forced tuition fees to rise to 35% of operating costs. By the year 2000, tuition fees will have risen up to 60% in five years, putting it out of the reach of middle-class families in this community and our community in Ontario. I ask you, can we believe this?

Welfare reform, one of the pillars of achievement that the member before me spoke about so much: Mike Harris, June 2, 1995, in the midst of the election — in an election we are asked to display our policies so that the people can judge us to see who is going to be worthy of government. What did Mike Harris say in his effort to try and convince people that they should vote for his government? "Welfare recipients must be given incentives to re-enter the workforce, learn new skills and enhance their self-esteem. Our plan, Ontario Works, does exactly that."

What happened? The work-for-welfare plan is in complete disarray. We have the minister even in the interim between the last session and this session, over the past four months, going back down to Wisconsin to find out where they went wrong. The plan's not working. There is the birthplace of workfare. What do they do? How come we can't get it off the ground? Despite spending \$1 million in advertising workfare, the program in most regions has yet to get under way. The regions are resisting. The volunteer community is resisting. Why? The municipalities are telling you — and you're not listening — "We can't afford to pay for this. We can't afford the administration for this."

Mr Guzzo: Following the Liberals, who were against it.

Mr Cullen: The member for Ottawa-Rideau should listen to his colleague who now is the chair of the regional municipality of Ottawa-Carleton. It's costing them money to run this damn thing, and every municipality is finding it so. What are you doing? "Just make it happen, make it work." Is this the listening, the kinder, gentler government that was promised here in this speech? Absolutely not. "Make it work or else."

Municipal amalgamation: Here's a beauty. Here's a real beauty, a gem. Mike Harris, speaking to a small-town paper, the *Fergus News Express*, in 1994 — again you've got to imagine those baby blues looking at that editorial board right there, emoting sincerity — "There is no cost for a municipality to maintain its name and identity. Why destroy our roots and pride? I disagree with restructuring because it believes that bigger is better. Services always cost more in larger communities." Anyone remember Bill 103, the Toronto megacity bill that passed even though

76% of Toronto residents voted against a forced amalgamation?

I simply cannot resist. That was Mike Harris who said that, oh my Lord, and yet in his speech from the throne, although it's not clear after this afternoon who actually wrote what in this — maybe I shouldn't blame Mike Harris. He's not sure what he vetted, what he approved. But there is a section in here dealing with referenda, that indeed the government's going to listen more to the community out there. They don't listen to municipalities. They don't listen to the hospitals. They don't listen to the seniors. They don't listen to the people with disabilities. I don't know. We're supposed to be seeing something different.

All I can tell you is that right now I've gone through one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, 10, 11 statements of claim made by the leader of the Conservative Party, Mike Harris, which he has failed utterly and entirely to honour, absolutely, utterly and entirely. If there was truth in advertising, this man would be convicted right now. But I'm not finished.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): You haven't got enough time, Al. There's too much —

Mr Cullen: Thank you for that.

Really, one of the more amazing things here is municipal downloading. In the Mike Harris Common Sense Revolution, Mr Harris, "Mike" to his friends, says, "You know, there's only one level of taxpayer — you." Remember those blue eyes, looking with such sincerity into the camera. "We will work closely with municipalities to ensure that any actions we will take will not result in an increase to property taxes."

Lo and behold, I even remember him — I was there at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference when he stood up and he said, "I pinkie swear." Where did he get that phrase, "pinkie swear"? Wasn't that his young son at the table saying, "Dad, when you promise, you've got to pinkie swear"? He went there, and I remember his statement, again those pearly blues talking, that the municipal downloading would be revenue-neutral.

Instead, what we see here is \$650 million in provincial services downloaded on to municipalities. The cost to the municipal taxpayer as a result of the initiatives taken by this government going through one, two, three, four, five iterations since January 1996 — five times he tried to get it right, and only most recently do we understand what they got right. Even then, the municipalities are saying, "It ain't right yet." But no one can doubt that it's going to cost taxpayers. There was only one level of taxpayer? That's right. It's going to cost taxpayers more money.

Culture, and my colleague will respond to this: Here we are during the campaign again, on May 30, 1995, with Mike Harris saying, "There's not a single cut in any of the cultural grants, in any of that pot of pie that is there." Bill Cameron, who is the journalist, says: "Is that an absolute commitment? You will not cut cultural grants?" Mike Harris, blue eyes, sincerity, looking into the camera: "Yes, it is."

We know what the reality is. Unhappily, we know what the reality is. Culture cuts: \$88 million, one third of the budget, including \$17 million in cuts to the Ontario Arts Council, \$20 million in cuts to libraries — how are people going to be able to learn to read if they don't have libraries to go to? — \$15 million in cuts to community support, and \$23 million in cuts to film development support. It's ridiculous.

Northern Ontario: Is there no area in this province that will be left alone by this juggernaut known as Mike Harris and his Common Sense Revolution? "No cuts to northern development": Mike Harris in the Legislature, June 22, 1994. You can read it in Hansard.

Interjection: Another broken promise.

Mr Cullen: Another broken promise.

Northern development budget cuts: \$49 million, including \$14 million in cuts for highway maintenance, \$15 million in cuts for community support, and \$7 million in cuts for mining initiatives. Even the north is not left alone in all of this.

Jobs: You know, maybe if we had the jobs that this government promised, we might be able to understand better what's going on, but I have to tell you, we have to thank the American economy for the growth in ours, because ours is an export market. It's not because people are spending so much more here; it's because people in the States and in Japan and China and in the Third World want our products. The member for Nepean talked about Nortel. Where does Nortel sell to? Eighty percent of it is offshore. Where are the people they're hiring? It's not locally in Ottawa-Carleton, let me tell you.

So here we have it, "725,000 new jobs in Ontario," Mike Harris in the Common Sense Revolution, and what do we have? We have a government that's asking us in its fiscal agenda to approve this kind of interim supply, this kind of expenditure of \$55 billion, this kind of deficit of \$5.6 billion, another additional tax cut, and it's going to miss its job target by 200,000 jobs.

What are we left with? An unemployment rate in Ontario of about 8%, double that when you count our youth, the very people who we should be investing in to provide for growth in the future.

2010

I could go on. I could talk about the promises in rent control where "Rent control will continue" was the promise of the day. I could talk about leadership: "Leadership by example." I could go on and on. But the bottom line, as we deal with the resolution here to give this government money so they can operate for the next six months — all I've given you here is that they have committed themselves to carry on. They will stay the course, which means more cuts to finance, an income tax cut and more broken promises.

It is with regret that I find myself here dealing with a motion of supply and the sad litany of a government that won't listen and won't honour its commitments.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I'd like to take the next 15 to 20 minutes or so to participate in the debate of concurrence in supply. This is one of the rare occasions

in the House where we have an opportunity to basically wander and speak about a number of issues and try to bring them back in together. I want to put on the record a couple of things here.

I listened intensely to the government members talk about what's happening in the economy and about how the Ontario economy, in some sectors, is doing well, which it is. The economy of Ontario, for a number of years, for probably at least a good 100 years, has done well or better — actually much better — than most other places in Canada because of where we are. We're situated to one of the biggest markets to the south with some of the most highly populated areas. We have a very strong industrial base. We have a very strong natural resource base. We have a good infrastructure. Ontario, because of a lot of policies set out by former governments in the past, has positioned itself in the economy of Canada quite well. What I take exception to is when the government gets up and tries to say that everything that's happening that's good in the economy is only because there is now a Conservative government in Ontario and nothing pre-1995 ever went well.

I listened to the member for Nepean talk about how there was a huge investment of almost half a billion dollars in his community by one of the telecommunications outfits. On that I congratulate him. That's not the first investment, however, that Ontario has ever seen. I can point to a number of investments totalling over almost a billion dollars that happened in my riding from 1992 to 1995. When was that? It's when Bob Rae was in office. There's a lot of investment that happens in this province on the basis of where we are, on the basis of the infrastructure of our economy, the infrastructure delivered by the province and our municipalities.

For the government to somehow suggest, ooh la la, that the economy of Ontario has done well only since 1995 I think is a bit of a stretch. Governments come and go but the economy of Ontario will be here. I get a bit annoyed when I listen to them try to take credit for everything under the sun. This government has done some things well, it has done some other things quite badly, and to all of a sudden suggest that everything that's good in the province has been since 1995 is offensive, not only to myself, but to a lot of other people who have participated in our economy, both in the private and public sectors, pre-1995. I take some exception to it.

But what I'd like to put on the record tonight is that the picture the government paints is simply that they have done a number of things to restructure the expenses of this provincial government in order to do two things: first of all, to try to balance its budget. I think most of us agree that over a period of time the government has to get to a point where it's basically not spending more money than it's taking in. Every government has worked towards that end. Unfortunately the Ontario economy has undergone huge changes because of free trade — NAFTA — and a whole bunch of other things. The government has had to restructure how it delivers its services. The second thing they're trying to do is ideological, to change Ontario to

their own vision, and that is an Ontario where, if you've got money you will do well, and if you don't have money you will do far less well than those who do.

The government has an ideological bent and that's where they want to go. They believe government should play little or no role when it comes to a lot of the things we take for granted here in Ontario. We know that in education alone the government wants to restructure education in its own vision; that is, a private system where people who have money will be able to send their kids to well-financed charter schools and where people who don't have money will have to send their children to public schools, which in the long run will be underfunded, understaffed, underresourced, undersupported and, quite frankly, will have difficulty getting the same level of education.

They're doing the same thing in the health care sector. They have allowed through Bill 26, the omnibus bill, and through a number of other bills that they've put through this House, humongous changes in our public system of health care, to where they're going to be allowing the privatization of a number of services that are presently organized by the public sector. They tell us that will be better. I say time will prove me right, that it will be worse. We just have to look at the United States and the health care system they have there as compared to Ontario, and we will find that our system is much better.

I'd like to go through a couple of letters I've received recently from constituents in my riding because I'm sure government members are getting these letters as well and are not taking the time to bring them into the House and share them with the rest of the Legislature and the people who watch on television. I listened to the member for Nepean come in and read a letter about how the economy is doing well, the letter of a particular individual, which I don't remember at this point. I'm sure the person was quite sincere when they wrote that letter, but I have other letters here that have been written to me from people who are equally sincere and who talk about some of the difficulties they now face because of changes this provincial government has put in place. I have a particular letter here. I'll start with this one written this last March from Jean Baxter from Iroquois Falls. She writes:

"I write this letter to draw your attention to the deteriorating level of health care services available in our community....

"During the past two years the following services, previously rendered by public health nurses, have been abandoned or reduced."

Home visits to seniors are no longer covered through the public health unit, this is something that no longer happens. Home visits to newborn babies are not being done by public health nurses any more. Foot care clinics have been basically eliminated. Blood pressure clinics have been reduced from a weekly to a monthly basis.

I look at one of the members across the way sort of saying, "What does that have to do with anything?" The point is, every dollar we spend on prevention saves us a lot of money down the road when it comes to more

obstructive ways of providing health care, as compared to trying to give people healthy lifestyles. One of the things that this government is doing, if this person goes through the letter that Mrs Baxter goes through, is that the government has made a choice. It says: "We're not going to spend money on preventive health care, instead we're going to try to save some quick dollars now by not giving money to these types of programs. We're smart, we're going to reduce our expenditures and hopefully at the end of the day we'll balance our budget." The problem is, this is really shortsighted. If you don't spend money on prevention up front, what you're going to get down the road is a higher bill because these people are going to get sicker for longer and it's going to cost us a lot more money to be able to take care of them if we're not able to deal with them up front.

She goes on to say that pre-kindergarten assessments are no longer being made. Public health nurses used to do pre-kindergarten assessments of our young children going into the school system to identify if there were any health care problems with those children before they entered school, for a whole bunch of reasons which I don't need to explain right now.

Health teaching in our schools is no longer offered by public health nurses. They used to send the public health nurses into our schools to teach our young children a healthy lifestyle, good diet, what the dos and don'ts are when it comes to a healthy lifestyle. This government has said: "This is not important any more. We're going to cut that. We're going to save money in the short term." You might be getting your fiscal target, as far as where you want to go on the fiscal side in the short term is concerned, but I'm telling you, in the long term Jean Baxter is right. She summarizes in this letter that what's going to happen in the long run is that if you want the services you're going to have to pay a user fee, which is a totally different issue, but more importantly, this is going to cost us oodles of money in the long run because people are going to get sicker, and when they get sicker it's going to cost our public health care system much, much more money, if we still do have a public health care system by that time.

I have another letter here and the person explicitly asked me not to say their name, and I take it from what she's writing here in the letter, she's a little bit worried about repercussions. I won't get into that, that's for another debate.

2020

This is interesting. She was writing to one of the local long-term-care facilities in our community, and I'm not going to say which one because I'm not comfortable singling out one institution because I think that would be unfair. She writes:

"I'm writing to complain about the lack of house-keeping" on this particular wing when she went to visit her mother. She explains in great detail, which I won't go through because it's a little bit graphic, the condition of the bathroom that was adjacent to her mother's room and the condition of the room. The point that she's getting at is that bathroom was soiled, it was dirty, it was, in her view,

very unsanitary. The room was dirty. She goes on to talk about how there were actually cobwebs at the top of the windows because the people had not had the opportunity to go in and dust it for a while. I would hope that's not the case, and it's something actually I need to take a look at in more detail.

She goes on at great length to talk about the condition of the room. She went to complain to the nurses' station to get somebody in there to clean up the room a little bit. "I went to the housekeeping office about the poor condition of my mother's room. I was told that due to cuts, the rooms are only cleaned once a week." Can you imagine? Can you imagine living in your home where you basically just leave everything to accumulate for a period of a week and you don't clean anything, what kind of condition your home would be in?

That's what they're doing in this particular long-term-care institution, on the basis of what your government has cut. Why? Because this particular home for the aged had to cut the budget of their housekeeping department to meet the fiscal target your government set, and as a result they no longer clean the rooms on a regular basis as they used to. They only clean them once a week.

This woman's poor mother is having to live in what she terms — and I'm not going to get into the details because the condition she feels her mother is living in is actually quite horrendous. This is as a direct result of what you're doing when it comes to how you're approaching the health care system, when it comes to the cuts you're making.

I hear the government talk at great length about how it's investing all kinds of money in the health care system. Listen, you're not fooling anybody. You're not fooling this particular woman who writes me this letter and says: "I look at the condition, the state of my mother, where she's now at the long-term-care institution she lives in, and I see a difference. The room used to be clean, she used to be well-fed, she used to be well taken care of. Over the last couple of years" — and she goes in great detail to explain that the condition in her long-term-care institution has dwindled to a point where she is really concerned about the health of her mother, because of where she is living and lack of care and lack of housekeeping. This is but one letter.

I have another person who writes me a letter, and I get a lot of these. They write, "Please don't mention my name." I find it really interesting that citizens of Ontario have difficulty having their name expressed in this House when they come to raise these particular issues.

I've gone back to talk to some of them and I say, "Why is it? You don't want the attention?" They say: "No, I'm afraid that if I say anything the cuts might be more severe when it comes to me, because I've heard that if you take an oppositional voice to this government, they're going to go back and penalize you."

They look at what Mrs Cunningham did to the women in the London area a couple of years ago. She basically said, "If you keep on protesting against this government, we're going to cut your budgets." It's to the point, in some cases, where citizens are afraid to speak out. It says right

on the top of the letter: "Please do not mention my name." I've actually gone back and talked to this person to ask him why and that's what he's told me.

This person goes on to explain an issue. It's about eight pages long. I'm not going to go into it in detail, but what the person says is: "I have a heart condition. I use a fair amount of medication. These drugs are fairly expensive." He goes on to list the various drugs he has to take and how a lot of these drugs have now been taken off the list. They are no longer being paid for by the drug program. In order to get them, he has to go through the Trillium program where he has to pay additional user fees that never had to be paid in the past when it came to these drugs.

This guy goes on to talk about how, prior to the last election, he had decided he was going to vote Conservative on the basis of the Mike Harris promise that there would be no user fees. He writes that in his letter: "Mike Harris promised in the last election that there would no user fees of any sort under a Mike Harris government." Then he goes on to explain, and he's got all of the various receipts, what he's bought with regard to medication over the last one month alone, \$1,600 worth of medication this poor man has had to buy between him and his wife for their health care, things they've never had to pay for before.

He goes on providing all of the various receipts he has had in order to pay for this and the conclusion is: "Basically the Mike Harris government not only" — and I can't use word that L word, and I won't because that would be unparliamentary, but basically says he feels the Mike Harris government did not —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): You can't infer the word either. Thank you.

Mr Bisson: Mr Speaker, I think the inference has made. I'm sorry about that.

But the point is that this person goes on to say that he voted for the Mike Harris government on the basis of a promise that there would be no user fees because he was upset at what was going on in Ontario at the time under the Rae government. This person goes on to say he would have been a lot better off with Bob Rae than he is now under Mike Harris. He's having to pay a lot of user fees that he never had to pay before. He's now worried that he's not going to have the money to pay for his medication. This is but one constituent.

I have another constituent who writes a letter. I'm not going to use the person's name here because he has it whited out and that must be because this person doesn't want his name used. The letter reads:

"Thousands of Ontarians have had their lives put on hold by funding cuts. I am sure there are thousands in worse shape than I am but that is no consolation" to me.

He goes on to say: "January 20, 1997, I developed heart problems. It took from that date, with waiting lists for testing, till March 10, 1997, before I could get an appointment at Sudbury Memorial Hospital for an angiogram.

"I have patiently been waiting for the past six months for an appointment to have a blockage corrected, a

procedure that according to the Sudbury doctor would have taken an additional 15 to 20 minutes to correct during the angiogram.

"Three weeks ago, I was finally given the date of September 25 to have this procedure performed, only to be crushed by receiving a call on September 24 to cancel my appointment for the next day."

This person wrote to me back in September of last year to get an angiogram done, and eventually bypass surgery, but he couldn't get it done within a period of six months because of what was happening with the funding cuts and how it had affected the waiting list at Sudbury Memorial Hospital. What ended up happening with this gentleman was I had to intervene and make some phone calls on his behalf to do what we could to get this guy in. The long and the short of the story is he was affected by your funding cuts. He had to wait six months just to get the angiogram done.

The other point I want to make is it's not right in the health care system that this particular individual ended up having to go to his provincial MPP to get health care services because of your funding cuts. We're finding in ridings like Windsor and London — my good friend Marion Boyd — I'm seeing in Shelley Martel's riding, in Howard Hampton's riding, in Len Wood's riding, a number of other members I discussed this issue with, that they're having the same problem. People are on cardiac waiting lists far longer than they have to be and often, quite frankly, don't make it off the waiting list because they end up dying before they ever get to the hospital.

I say to this government, what you can extrapolate from that is that this particular guy ended up having to wait six months to get his procedure done, and only when my office got involved did the guy finally get it done, and that's wrong. The health care system shouldn't work that way. The reason it's failing is because your government has cut the money to the Sudbury Memorial Hospital cardiac program and people are having to wait far longer than they have.

I have a couple of other letters here that are of interest. I have a letter from the Lord's Kitchen Society in Timmins. This is indicative of a number of letters that I've received in the last six months to a year. It says, "...the Lord's Kitchen Society, a non-denominational and non-profit organization, served last year over 21,000 meals, at a cost of \$43,557...."

"With the addition of a second weekly meal at St Matthew's Anglican Church along with an increase in the total number of guests our costs continue to rise. We, once again, appeal to you for support. This year our expenditures for eight months have already exceeded \$38,000."

The point is that the Lord's Kitchen is now serving more people than it ever has before. Make the connection. People go hungry; people end up at the Lord's Kitchen. Why are they going hungry? Because your government has decided to effectively cut the welfare rates, effectively kick people off FBA and GWA and a whole bunch of other changes that you've made where people are now

having to go to the Lord's Kitchen to get a meal and they're not able to keep up.

I have another such letter, from Community Living Timmins, that says:

"Community Living Timmins will be establishing a fund-raising committee. The focus of this committee will be to raise funds for new service initiatives...covering existing service deficits as well as enhancing already established services. Your support in this initiative is needed."

They go on to say here that they ain't got enough money. Why? Because your government has cut them. For them to try to provide the services in our community, they're having to go to myself and a whole bunch of other people in our community — labour, business and others — to fund-raise what we used to do before by way of our tax system.

The point I want to make to you through these letters is simply this: Once you start making the kinds of cuts you've been making blindly and, I would say, badly, what you end up doing is affecting programs that affect people in their daily lives. In the end, you may be achieving in the short term your fiscal target, but in the long term, these cuts that you're making are going to cost our society a heck of a lot of money, both in misery of the individual and also when it comes to what it's going to cost our taxpayers further down the road when they have to pay additional costs in health care and additional costs in a whole bunch of other government services because of your particular cuts.

2030

Mr Bill Grimmer (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I'm pleased to join this lively debate on the motion for interim supply. I note that the debate has gotten so good that we've even got little clusters of discussion going on throughout the House about the interim supply bill.

The motions for interim supply are of interest to all members in the House, me no less than any other member, because this is the kind of motion that leads to expenditures for such things as nursing homes, post-secondary institutions and children's aid societies. These are all priority services that the people of Ontario want their government to provide and to pay for.

I'm pleased to say that in the wake of the throne speech, the kinds of difficult decisions that our government has had to make to try and get the province's fiscal house back in order have led to us getting back on the right track fiscally and provided us with the opportunity, I think, to embark on some expenditure areas that are probably long overdue and that previous governments really haven't had a chance to embark on because they have not been responsible fiscally.

The member for Nepean has really provided a lot of the information on the general health of the provincial economy and how Ontario has outstripped the other provinces in the recovery period. In fact, real gross domestic product is rising at a rate that far exceeds the predictions from the private sector.

One of the most important figures for people in my riding and for people throughout the country is the number of jobs that have been created in jurisdictions. While Canada generally has done well in that area, Ontario has been particularly creating a lot of jobs since February 1997. In that period the private sector has created 261,000 net new jobs, so the province certainly has good reason to be very confident.

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): What was that figure?

Mr Grimmett: That was 261,000 net new jobs since February 1997. Sixty per cent of the new jobs created in Canada have been created in Ontario in that time period.

Another indicator that people in my riding keep an eye on is the help wanted index. That is an index that is kept of the number of jobs in the papers throughout the country. The help wanted index in Ontario has been rising and is now at its highest rate since September 1990. Remember, we had a winter with very little snow. I know in my riding people would think that would lead to a loss of jobs but in fact in March 1998 the Ontario help wanted index climbed 2.9% in Ontario, yet another indication of a healthy, confident economy.

I thought I'd take a few minutes tonight to talk about the kind of confidence that exists in my riding which has led to a lot of good, positive business information. When I sat down to write this speech, I found that I was actually coming up with more ideas than would be allowed in the brief time that I have tonight, so I'm going to try to very quickly summarize the good-news announcements in a business context that have occurred in the Muskoka-Georgian Bay area in recent months. I think it's an indication that the confidence level is high, consumer confidence is driving the retail trade and the entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well in Muskoka-Georgian Bay.

Earlier this month the finance minister who opened the debate this evening was the guest speaker at the first Muskoka industry luncheon. That was a combined event. The Gravenhurst Chamber of Commerce, the Bracebridge Chamber of Commerce and the Muskoka home builders got together and at that discussion he outlined many of the measures that our government has introduced to improve the province's economy and he noted that in the Muskoka-Kawartha region for February, a time when employment in central Ontario is sometimes difficult to find, employment was up 12,000 jobs from last year. That's an 8% increase year over year from February 1997. I think that's a very impressive number, particularly taken in the month of February.

Bracebridge-based Muskoka Transport, a family business recently ranked as one of the top 100 fleets in the country, reports that its business has increased 16% in the first six months of the current fiscal year. This is good news as the trucking industry provides a good indication of the state of the economy, not only provincially but also in our region.

The Bracebridge Chamber of Commerce has reported a better than 10% increase in its membership this year, as the community enjoys positive economic growth. They

also reported an increase in the number of visitors who have been seeking information, both in the summer and in the winter.

Minister Eves and I were able to tour the Meritor automotive plant in Bracebridge. This is a high-tech auto industry related plant. They design and build seat adjustment systems, both power and manual, for cars and light trucks throughout the world. Some of their products are shipped as far away as Czechoslovakia. Meritor expects solid growth in the next five years and expects to add about 100 new employees to their current 423; again, continued good news right in Bracebridge.

NEBS Business Forms in Midland announced that it'll be adding an additional 30,000 square feet of warehouse space and creating 10 new full-time positions to accommodate expected increased volumes in business. That expansion is expected to be completed this fall.

Muskoka has a new fitness club — Muskoka Fitness. I've been so busy going to openings of new businesses that I was unable to make it the opening of the Muskoka Fitness club but I expect to make it there within the next year.

Elcan Optical Technologies is another high-tech business in my riding. It's located in Midland. They employ 650 workers. They're predicting even stronger growth than expected due to the consolidation of plants in the United States, another example of an American plant closing and the extra work coming to Ontario.

Earlier this year, Career Blazers Learning Centre, which is an international computer training business, expanded to Huntsville. The existing office in Bracebridge opened in 1995, and since that time it's graduated more than 1,000 students in computer upgrading.

In Midland there's the \$75 million Tiffin-by-the-Bay waterfront community development that's attracting a great deal of attention as the Trilet Group plans the creation of waterfront homes, community parks, open space and further commercial development on the waterfront in Midland.

In MacTier, I reported last year that the community suffered a devastating fire on the main street that destroyed two important local businesses. Last month, Wayne's Home Hardware and the Knechtel Food Market reopened, in part due to the support of the people of MacTier.

In Midland, the vacant Mitsubishi plant was sold and continues as a viable entity, with the promise of over 200 jobs.

In Port Carling, a former supermarket building is being converted into as many as nine retail units and most of them are expected to be occupied for the busy summer season.

In Gravenhurst, a very aggressive council is planning to hold two open houses for residents to help draft a vision statement for the community. Goals will include increasing tourism and supporting the development of a diverse and healthy economy.

Muskoka Tourism has entered into a unique partnership that will help promote local tourism. Fonorola is

sponsoring Muskoka Tourism's popular 1-800 service to encourage the public to get more tourism information.

Swift Canoe and Kayak have announced they're moving their headquarters from Oxtongue Lake to Gravenhurst, where they'll open a manufacturing workshop and showroom on Highway 11. The move is expected to bring as many as 20 jobs to the area within two years. The reason for the move is that they needed a bigger location because their kayak business is booming.

2040

In Huntsville the well-known Deerhurst Resort, a major local employer, is planning major renovations and an expansion of the sports pavilion. There will be more hotel units, additional meeting space and a new indoor pool. The changes should make Deerhurst an even more attractive conference facility. It already touts itself as being the largest resort of its kind east of the Rockies.

Another well-known Muskoka resort, Aston Villa, is currently undergoing a \$2-million renovation to modernize the popular facility. I know the owners there would not be investing the money if they had doubts about the Ontario economy.

In Windermere, the well-known Windermere House is preparing to launch its 128th season as a major Muskoka resort, despite having a major fire two years ago. The rebuilt facility recently received a prestigious four-star rating from the AAA/CAA.

In Huntsville, Muskoka Heritage Place's Portage Flyer project is under way. This is a unique partnership between private industry, the local chamber of commerce and several non-profit groups that are trying to get an old railway with a steam train working. This will be an important tourism project and it's likely to generate about \$2.5 million. They hope to have it online for the year 2000.

Evans Forrec, a Bracebridge-based business, is developing a strong international reputation for its development of theme parks around the world; in fact the Disney Corp often has Evans design their theme parks. They have about 40 employees, and the company is talking about possible expansion, perhaps within a year.

Clearly the entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well, both in the province and in my riding. More and more people are finding out that Muskoka-Georgian Bay is a good place to do business and an excellent place to visit. I believe we have turned the corner in Ontario with our provincial finances on the road to recovery, and now we have the opportunity enhance our services, those services that my constituents hold dear.

I thought I'd take the last few minutes to speak about the children's aid society and the important work they do. I was pleased to announce recently on behalf of the community and social services minister additional funding for children's aid services in my riding. These funds are part of the money that's included in the interim supply motion this evening. They're going to hire additional child protection staff and help strengthen local child protection efforts.

Hundred of preschool children in my riding with speech and language difficulties are also going to benefit from funding for new services announced earlier this year by Minister Ecker and Minister Witmer.

Last week Environment Minister Norm Sterling announced that the village of Port Carling will receive funding of up to \$3.5 million to build a new water treatment plant. The people of Port Carling have been waiting a long time for this money. They have been waiting for this money. It was not able to be provided by previous governments because of the fiscal situation they put themselves in.

After a period of tough decisions, I believe we can look at enhancing our key services. This motion this evening and the throne speech indicate that there are great opportunities in the future, and we certainly will be building on our sensible fiscal management. I think you're going to see a resulting strong economy. I would urge support for the motion this evening.

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): Tonight I just want to remind people who are watching on television that this isn't the reruns; this is actually live tonight at about 10 to 9 on Monday evening.

We're talking about a resolution by Mr Sterling to pay the salaries of civil servants starting on April 1. It's interesting that we could have been recalled to the Legislature a month ago. We're here debating this resolution a few days before these payments have to be made to civil servants when we could have been doing this a long time ago. Because of the mismanagement of the Tory government, we're doing this here tonight at this late hour.

When we're talking about this, we need to think about what was said in the Common Sense Revolution — I've got a copy of the Common Sense Revolution — when they talked about what they're going to do to civil servants back in the 1995 election. I just want to quote some of the things that were said there. They were going to trim the cost of the provincial government workforce by 15%. That's 13,000 employees. They're going to make those reductions "through attrition and retirement packages. Where necessary, this could mean cutting some positions." "Cutting some positions" — I just want to reiterate that. But they're confident that "the tremendous growth in the private sector will provide ample job opportunities for those who may be displaced."

I want to ask people, what kind of jobs are going to replace those public service jobs? What kind of jobs are going to replace those persons who were providing quality public services in areas like health care, education and other types of services in this province? People in Ontario don't want to have a job at any cost. They don't want to have McJobs. They don't want to have jobs that are going to be paying minimum wages when they could be providing jobs that provide services that the public appreciate and are willing to pay for here in Ontario.

This afternoon I went to a rally by OPSEU employees, the very same employees who are going to benefit from this resolution to be paid after April 1. I want to say that

we support their efforts to retain long-term employment, security on the job, decent wages and decent pensions, and reject what this government is trying to do: to downsize, to privatize and to eliminate their jobs for the very purpose of fuelling their phoney tax scheme. That's what it's all about. These are the sorts of things the Mike Harris government is trying to do to civil servants here in the province.

They're trying to privatize print and mail services. These are workers who for the most part are persons who suffer from disabilities. It's shameful that that is the subject of the Mike Harris attacks. They want to downsize these services. They couldn't get away with it. They tried to eliminate these jobs last year and they weren't able to get away with it, so now what they're trying to do is reduce the funding to government mail services so that those who rely on those services are going to be forced to look elsewhere. What that is really is downsizing through the back door. That's what it's about.

What the Tory government is doing as well is trying to privatize Central Collection Services. They're also trying to privatize the Ontario Realty Corp, the Queen Street Mental Health Centre, and the Ontario Securities Commission. This is what members of OPSEU are trying to fight against right now, and we join with them in their struggles.

The reason this is going on is because the Tory government is interested in finding the funds for their phoney tax scheme, a tax scheme that benefits very few but picks on those who are marginalized and those who are vulnerable. These are cuts, cuts, cuts. That's what it's all about. It's an attack on unionized workers here in Ontario. It's got nothing to do with efficiency; it's got nothing to do with improving the economy here in the province of Ontario. This is an attack on unionized workers. It's privatization through the back door.

We know that the people who are paying the cost of these cuts are the most vulnerable in Ontario, those who are marginalized, and those who really are faced with inequity in bargaining with their employers and with the government. But OPSEU employees have been able to negotiate some favourable arrangements because of the strength and solidarity of their membership.

This government has had a pretty lousy track record when it comes to going to the courts, going to arbitration, trying through other means to attack public sector workers. They haven't been successful because those systems by and large are fair. Going to the courts, going to arbitration, are generally systems that provide some fairness to people who find themselves in unequal bargaining positions.

This government doesn't like the results, because time after time they have been confronted with something they

negotiated in the collective agreement between Management Board and the Ontario Public Sector Employees Union, and that is appendix 9, which deals with employment stability for people who provide services in the public sector.

In that appendix 9 it says, "The employer shall make reasonable efforts to ensure that where there is a disposition or any other transfer of bargaining unit functions or jobs to the private sector or broader public sector, employees in the bargaining unit are offered positions with the new employer on terms and conditions that are as close as possible to the then existing terms and conditions of employment of the employees in the bargaining unit": reasonable efforts to find similar employment for those people who are displaced by the privatization and downloading of this government's services. Time and time again, the government has been found to be in breach of those provisions.

OPSEU workers are concerned that this government is going to not go to the arbitration process any longer, but that because they are able to get away with just about anything because of their huge majority here in this place, what they're going to do is legislate an end to those reasonable provisions in the OPSEU collective agreement. That's something we must fight against, because a government cannot use their majority to oppress the interests of their employees, to oppress the public interest and to oppress the best interests of everyone here in the province. We must ensure the democratic process is followed and that this government doesn't abuse that process and use their majority to say that a contract is not a contract.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Eves has moved that the Minister of Finance be authorized to pay the salaries of the civil servants and other necessary payments pending the voting of supply for the period commencing May 1, 1998, and ending October 31, 1998, such payments to be charged to the proper appropriations following the voting of supply April 23, 1998.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move adjournment of the House.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned till 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2054.

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Deuxième session, 36^e législature

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Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

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L'honorable Chris Stockwell

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 28 April 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 28 avril 1998

The House met at 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

JOHN BASSETT

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I rise on behalf of Dalton McGuinty, my leader, and the Liberal caucus to pay tribute to John Bassett, who passed away yesterday. I think it's fair to say that few people have had such a broad impact on Ontario as Mr Bassett.

As we move increasingly to an era of sort of faceless multinational organizations led by relatively anonymous people, we're struck all the more by the memory of John Bassett who personally and by the sheer force of his personality shaped events in Ontario. For the last 50 years few people have had an impact on Ontario such as Mr Bassett.

All of us knew him first as the owner and publisher of the Toronto Telegram, then as the chairman of the Toronto Maple Leafs and the Argos at the same time, and then as the founder of the first private TV station here in Ontario.

Obviously Mr Bassett was a strong Conservative supporter. I'm a Liberal, but we recognize that he had the strength of his convictions.

I have a saying that I carry with me which says that at least someone like Mr Bassett, who, if he wins, knows the triumph of high achievement and who, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat. That personifies Mr Bassett.

On behalf of our colleagues, I particularly want to say to our colleague Isabel Bassett and the Bassett family that we extend our sincere sympathies.

MAY DAY

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): This weekend the beginning of May, May 1, or May Day as it has come to be known across the world, is a time when workers unite to recognize the contribution they all make to the quality of life of their communities and their countries.

In Sault Ste Marie this year the Sault Ste Marie and District Labour Council and myself will be sponsoring a number of events, celebrations, public education, a chance to recognize some groups who participate in the work of our community. We're bringing to Sault Ste Marie Charlie

Angus, publisher/editor of High Grader Magazine, as well as an author, journalist and musician; and Ted Schmidt, another author and journalist, community activist and retired teacher and public speaker, to participate in a number of events that will happen Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

On Thursday, these gentlemen will be presenting to senior high school students at Bawating and Sir James Dunn public secondary schools, and on Friday to the St Mary's and St Basil's secondary schools senior high school students. On Friday afternoon at 4:30, at the Canadian Motor Hotel, we will be recognizing the contribution teachers have made to the quality of life of families and students in the province over a number of years. Then of course on Saturday we will be having a celebration of labour, a celebration of work, at the Moose Lodge Hall on Trunk Road, being entertained by the Grievous Angels.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I'm pleased to rise in the House today to make the House aware of the work I have been doing on safe schools legislation for our province.

For the past two years I have been consulting with parents students, teachers, principals, police and other education experts across Ontario to draft my private member's bill, entitled An Act to Promote Safety in Ontario Schools and Create Positive Learning Environments for Ontario Students.

My Safe Schools Act will require all boards in Ontario to design and implement school safety programs, school codes of conduct, and anti-vandalism policies; provide for effective early intervention strategies by requiring boards to design and implement anti-bullying policies and by providing boards with the ability to direct psychological assessments of students they believe are at risk; provide a provincial violence- and weapons-free schools policy and allow boards the ability to exclude violent students from regular classroom settings; give police the tools they need by creating a special new provincial offence for trespassing on school property and backing it up with real consequences; direct all boards in Ontario to design and implement alternative education programs for suspended and excluded students; require parents to be liable for any damage done to school property by their children; and protect teachers and staff from civil liability.

My Safe Schools Act is a proactive and carefully designed policy that will make Ontario schools the safest

places in the world in which to study and work, and I look forward to the support of every member in this House when I introduce my bill.

People across Ontario can vote on line for the first time on this private member's bill at www —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): If anyone needs to understand what a high price we have paid for the Mike Harris revolution in Ontario, one can certainly point to the state of mental health care in our province.

In my community of Thunder Bay, psychiatric bed cuts and an ever-shrinking number of psychiatric professionals have brought us to a point that can only be described as a crisis. Beds at the Lakehead Psychiatric Hospital, as well as at the psychiatric wing of the Thunder Bay Regional Hospital, are almost always full, leaving many people with no access to needed hospital care.

People are frightened, and the situation has now reached a point where the Thunder Bay district jail has even turned into a holding tank for people who cannot access a bed but who need to be protected or detained.

The Minister of Health can talk all she wants about ensuring better community supports and the value of deinstitutionalization, but the fact is that these supports are not in place. She must recognize that the crisis is real and must be dealt with now.

To add to this horrible situation, the Lakehead Psychiatric Hospital is still officially slated for closure in March 1999, less than a year away. Surely this deadline cannot be met, and Minister, you need to publicly state that.

Long-term goals for the care of our mentally ill are laudable and that process must continue. This might be better achieved if you met your commitment to form a northwestern Ontario mental health agency to coordinate this effort. But regardless, the crisis we face today should be where your attentions are directed now.

People deserve quality mental health care. Your drastic cuts to the system must be stopped before it is truly too late.

BOROUGH OF EAST YORK

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Members of this House will know that on numerous occasions I and my colleague Marilyn Churley from Riverdale have asked the Minister of Municipal Affairs to bring democratic representation at the municipal level to the people of East York. We asked him to provide a legislative solution to provide a third councillor for East York.

Members of this House will also know that on repeated occasions the minister responded to us by saying that that was the municipality's decision, that if they decided that's what they wanted, he would facilitate the legislative provision for that. That assurance was given in the House, it was given at committee, and I'm here to collect on that assurance.

The city of Toronto has passed a resolution calling for a third councillor, calling for a by-election to be held by this September. This afternoon I will be introducing a private member's bill to facilitate that.

My commitment to the minister is that I will work with him, either with respect to my private member's bill or with respect to legislation he may want to bring forward, to achieve that in a timely fashion that does not take up a lot of time on the legislative agenda of this House.

I know the minister will live up to his commitment; at least I'm hoping the minister will live up to his commitment. It's well recorded. It is expected by the people of East York. I'm here to say, along with Ms Churley, that we're willing to work in a very constructive manner to ensure that the people of East York receive the fair, democratic representation they should have had from day one, that they get their third councillor for East York.

WINE INDUSTRY

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I recently had the pleasure and company of the Honourable David Tsubouchi, Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, as well as Bill Saunderson, chairman of the Ontario International Trade Corp, in my riding of Durham East. Minister Tsubouchi was on hand to present Ocala Wines of Port Perry with a certificate recognizing their newly listed product for retail sale with the LCBO. The LCBO has purchased cases of Ocala's Montmorency Cherry Wine for sale across the province.

I would like to acknowledge the owners of Ocala winery, Alissa and Irwin Smith. Ocala is one of Ontario's smallest and most northerly wineries. Since 1915 the Smith family has been growing orchard fruit. This fourth generation family business expanded in 1994 when a fruit winery was established. Ocala has already received 13 medals since opening just three years ago.

I would also like to recognize the activities of another winery in Durham just recently opened by Fred and Sandy Archibald. Their estate winery is located just north of my home in Bowmanville.

The Archibald family has operated a successful apple orchard in the area for over 40 years. They expanded their business in June of last year with the opening of an apple winery with 15 different apple-based wines. The Archibald orchard just recently won an award at the Toronto Wine and Cheese Show with their Spiced Winter Apple, a version of ice wine.

I'd like to commend the Archibalds and the Ocala winery for their successes.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

RESTRUCTURATION DES MUNICIPALITÉS

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): I would like to comment on the downloading of provincial responsibilities to municipalities and their actual impact

on services and tax rates in my riding of Prescott and Russell.

Every since he started dumping responsibilities on to municipalities, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing keeps repeating over and over that this whole exercise will be revenue-neutral, that no tax increase will be needed and that the quality of services will remain the same.

He should come and visit my riding, where already one of the nine municipalities recently announced it will have to increase its taxes by up to 20% in order to maintain the level of services. Furthermore, a local newspaper reported last week that some businesses will see an increase of 800%. Yes, 800%.

Depuis le premier jour où les détails de ce délestage massif ont été annoncés, j'ai dénoncé le fait que les municipalités des comtés unis de Prescott et Russell devront faire face à un manque à gagner de plus de 20 \$ millions par l'an 2000.

Constituents from Prescott and Russell do not want municipal services to vanish while taxes are increased by 20% or more. It is obvious that this government's down-loading will mean tax increases at the municipal level in Prescott and Russell and in many other ridings throughout Ontario.

1340

BOROUGH OF EAST YORK

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I am calling on the Minister of Municipal Affairs to act quickly to allow East York a third member to sit on the Toronto city council. I fought along with my colleague from Beaches-Woodbine and the Citizens for Local Democracy and Team East York in East York to try to get the minister to amend the City of Toronto Act to allow this to happen, and then to get the minister and the Tory caucus to agree to support the private member's bill of my colleague from Beaches-Woodbine. The minister repeatedly said he would wait and let the new city council determine whether this should happen. They have made a decision. They are calling on the government to enact legislation to allow a by-election in East York by September.

I have spoken to the minister personally, and he seems to be assuring me that he will allow this to happen. I would like to see the minister stand up in the House as soon as possible, because the residents are concerned — they haven't been assured yet that he will keep his commitment — and tell the residents of East York that he will keep his word and allow this by-election to happen.

My colleague is going to present a private member's bill today, but I can assure you that our caucus will be willing to accept anything the government has to offer, and we will make sure that nothing else is added to this bill.

JOHN BASSETT

Mr Jim Brown (Scarborough West): Today I rise to honour a great Canadian, a great inspiration for me and

for many people, a fellow I used to work for some 35 years ago, John W.H. Bassett. Mr Bassett ran the Telegram, he owned the Argos and the Leafs, and he provided a great deal of excitement for Toronto. His positive motivation in everything he did certainly created a great feeling for this great metropolis and for this country.

Mr Bassett founded CFTO, CTV, Baton Broadcasting; Mr Bassett helped immeasurably in the creation of the Toronto Sun; he went on to head CSIS. He was a great Canadian, and on behalf of the House, I would like to send sympathies and condolences to the Bassett family.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I would like to inform the members of the Legislative Assembly that we have in the Speaker's gallery today the interns from the National Assembly of Quebec: Patrik Gilbert, Philippe Launaz, Mathieu Belleville and Gilles-André Gosselin. Welcome.

Interjections.

The Speaker: The next time you are here, the member for St Catharines will translate.

WORKERS' MEMORIAL DAY

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Mr Speaker, we have unanimous consent for each party to have one speaker address this day of mourning for injured workers and workers who have died on the job.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr Patten: Today I rise in recognition and observance of the day of mourning for persons killed or injured in the workplace. As many members may know, the Canadian legislation designating the day of mourning to remember workers who were killed, disabled or injured in the workplace and workers afflicted with industrial disease received royal assent on February 1, 1991. Today, April 28, has particular significance since it's the anniversary of the day in 1914 when Canada's first workers' compensation legislation was passed here in Ontario.

In 1996, 388 Ontarians lost their lives in the course of doing their jobs, including 96 immediate deaths, 23 not immediate deaths, 77 on 100% pension and 197 from occupational diseases. Injury data for 1996 indicate that 345,000-plus claims were registered that year and 227,000 injuries happened to workers. Workplace injuries and illness accounted for millions in compensation claims.

We can't rest, of course, until all such tragedies are eliminated, tragedies such as the death of Robert Robinson, a 41-year-old man who lived in my community who, on April 15, when he was repairing a wood chipper being used to shred tree limbs downed in the January ice storm, was killed instantly when several pieces of metal flew out of the clipper and struck him in the head; and earlier this year in Thunder Bay Wallace Hynnes died due to complications from a fall he suffered last June. Mr Hynnes fell

from the platform of an 80-tonne front-loader while working in a service bay.

Deaths in Canada from traumatic injuries in the workplace are approximately 1,000 every year. This national figure does not include deaths which occur from industrial diseases, however. Then the figure would jump significantly. The elimination of the Occupational Disease Panel by the government has seriously jeopardized what I believe to be a valuable independent body that, among many roles, served to examine the impact of workplace carcinogens on workers' health.

The number of casualties at the moment statistically is dropping, but, with all statistics, we of course must be cautious in our interpretations. Are they dropping because we are doing a better job of accident or injury prevention in the workplace or because of the general drop in employment, particularly in those sectors such as construction, mining, logging and heavy industry where injuries and accidents have a disproportionate amount of the statistical base.

The quality of worker health and safety means healthier families and healthier communities. Employers and employees alike must ensure that proper health and safety protocols are in place. When the people responsible do not take these matters seriously and do not act on health and safety issues, persons are unnecessarily killed or seriously injured in the workplace.

The threat of job loss, coupled with privatization, restructuring and layoffs, has contributed towards the continuance of unsafe conditions in some workplaces. No one should be reluctant to speak out against unsafe conditions at work for fear of losing their jobs.

On this the day of mourning, I'd like to underscore the need for employers and employees to work together to prevent workplace injuries and illnesses. All of us in our party join with our colleagues in the Legislature and our constituents in communities all over Ontario as we observe a moment of silence and pay tribute to those who have died. We especially pay tribute to their loved ones — to their spouses, their children, their parents, their colleagues and their friends who are living without them.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Today is the day we set aside in Ontario each year to honour the memory of all those who have died in workplace accidents or from occupational disease. Each year on April 28 workers take time to remind ourselves that it is important at all times to "Mourn the dead and fight for the living."

In Hamilton this morning, my leader, Howard Hampton, and I were part of a solemn ceremony of observance. Our Hamilton community has been saddened by several recent workplace tragedies, including a fatal accident last month at Dominion Castings that took the life of Michael Jess, leaving five young children without a father.

There have also been observations here in Toronto and in other cities throughout the province.

It's always worth remembering why April 28 has been chosen as a day of mourning. This date commemorates April 28, 1914, when this Legislature passed Ontario's first Workmen's Compensation Act. That legislation

embodied an historic compromise between workers and employers in which injured workers and their families were guaranteed fair compensation and employers were shielded from liability litigation.

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There has been official observance of the day of mourning in Ontario since 1988 when this House passed unanimously a resolution introduced by Bob Rae, then Leader of the Opposition. Since then, the federal Parliament has also declared April 28 a day of mourning. The idea has also spread to the United States and to Australia.

In the 10 years since this tradition began in Ontario there has been a steady decline in the annual totals of deaths and injuries recorded in Ontario. For 1997 there were nearly 200 deaths and almost 350,000 reported injuries. But even one workplace death is too many. We cannot rest until we are assured that everyone is safe from danger on the job.

Here in Ontario a key tool for eliminating hazards is the joint health and safety committee that is mandated under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Through this committee, workers and employers are able to work together to advance the cause of safety on the job.

If I might, I would mention I also attended an event this morning at St Joseph's Villa where the employer and the employees have done such an outstanding job that not only do they hold joint ceremonies in the workplace, but in recognizing that this is meant to be a day of public awareness, they invite the public to come in and participate also. I was pleased to be there to congratulate both the employer and the union in their partnership in trying to achieve the ideals of what this day represents.

I might point out that CUPE Local 1404 presented the workplace with a national award, but in doing so also mentioned that Bills 99 and 15 have taken us in the wrong direction in terms of workplace health and safety.

Recently, the importance of the system we have here in Ontario was emphasized by the report of the inquiry into the Westray mine disaster in Nova Scotia. That inquiry cited the Ontario legislation, including mandatory joint health and safety committees, as a model that could have prevented the Westray disaster.

While working to stop accidents on the job, we must also redouble our efforts to eliminate conditions and substances in the workplace that lead to cancer and other diseases. A recent book entitled *Workplace Roulette: Gambling with Cancer*, calls attention to the way blue-collar workers in our society "are suffering the greatest cancer risk and are being treated like test subjects for the effects of industrial chemicals."

While we organize and fight for the living, it is fitting that today we observe a moment of silence in memory of all those who lost their lives on the job in Ontario. Our collective thoughts are with their families and friends.

Along with my colleagues in the NDP caucus, I am proud to join all members of the House in remembering these fallen workers.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Labour, Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): Today, April 28, we join with all Canadians in a national day of mourning. On this day, we acknowledge the human toll of workplace injury and death. I ask everyone in Ontario to observe this day of mourning and to reflect on lives lost and families left behind.

Today is also an opportunity for workers, employers and legislators to affirm a shared commitment to preventing workplace injury and death, because in an instant lives can be lost or changed forever. In an instant loved ones can vanish. In an instant children can be left without parents, or parents left without a child. In an instant the world can be a different place, once full, now with a gaping hole.

All of us, every employer, every worker, every legislator, have a duty, a duty to do our best to prevent this human tragedy, to prevent this human suffering. All of us have a duty to prevent that instant from happening.

If we are not responsible for the safety of our workplaces, then who will be? If we as employers and employees together are not responsible for our own safety and the safety of all workers, then who will be?

As Minister of Labour, it saddens me almost every day when I receive reports of every serious injury and every death in the workplaces of the province of Ontario, and I make a point to reflect on what this means to the families and people involved. I make a point to remember what can happen in an instant.

We are making progress. The number of lost-time injuries has been declining in the province. For the first time in our history we set a provincial target to reduce lost-time injuries by 30% by the year 2000, and we are on target.

We have placed a new and vigorous emphasis on prevention of workplace injury and death, but we cannot judge the success of our efforts and the efforts of all our very genuine and innovative partners in workplace health and safety by looking at statistics alone. We will never know whose life was saved, whose limb was saved, whose family was spared the agony of the loss of a loved one, and they will not likely know themselves. That is what at times can make this work seem less urgent to some. But we can know and do know those whose lives were lost, whose limbs were lost and whose families were broken. It is their faces in our minds and in our hearts that drive us forward for those we cannot see.

So it is today that I ask that we stand for a moment of silence to honour those who have lost their lives on the job and to remember with compassion their families and loved ones.

The House observed a moment's silence.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (LICENCE SUSPENSIONS), 1998

LOI DE 1998 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (SUSPENSIONS DE PERMIS)

Mr Grimmitt moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 5, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to the suspension of drivers' licences / Projet de loi 5, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les suspensions de permis de conduire.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

A short comment?

Mr Bill Grimmitt (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): This bill would amend the Highway Traffic Act to automatically suspend the driver's licence of a person convicted of impaired operation of a vessel, which is already the case for persons convicted of impaired operation of an automobile or a snowmobile.

PARTNERSHIPS STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES SOCIÉTÉS EN NOM COLLECTIF

Mr Tsubouchi moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 6, An Act to amend the law with respect to Partnerships / Projet de loi 6, Loi visant à modifier des lois en ce qui concerne les sociétés en nom collectif.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

A brief comment, Minister? No.

CITY OF TORONTO AMENDMENT ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA CITÉ DE TORONTO

Ms Lankin moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 7, An Act to amend the City of Toronto Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 7, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la cité de Toronto.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

A brief comment?

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): This bill is I hope the last step in what has been a long road. This bill amends the City of Toronto Act, 1997, to increase the number of councillors elected for the ward of East York from two to three. A by-election will be held to fill the new seat and the new councillor would hold office until the next regular election, in the year 2000.

IRISH HERITAGE DAY ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR

LE JOUR DU PATRIMOINE IRLANDAIS

Mr O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 8, An Act proclaiming Irish Heritage Day / Projet de loi 8, Loi proclamant le Jour du patrimoine irlandais.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

A brief comment?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I expect everyone in the House would like to celebrate their heritage, and most importantly the Irish heritage.

1400

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move that notwithstanding the order of the House of April 27, 1998, the House shall not meet from 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm on April 28, 1998. That's today.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My first question today is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. You will know that I have made every effort to put the children of Ontario on the political agenda. You will know that I've spent a lot of time trying to figure out a way for us to give them a hand with their special needs. I happen to believe that especially if you get the early years right, the child can be set for life. You end up with somebody who is responsible, happy and productive, the kind of adult we'd all like to have living next door to us.

I've put together a solid package of proposals, and I know you have had a copy to review those. They're called First Steps, 41 positive recommendations that would act in a real way, if you were to implement them, to help Ontario's kids.

My question is very simple: Will you implement First Steps?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): As the honourable member will know, both the Minister without Portfolio responsible for children and I have reviewed his report. We appreciate the

input. He will also note from the response that I sent back to him recently that many of his recommendations we are already implementing to improve the lives of children in Ontario.

Mr McGuinty: What your response in writing and your response here tell me, Minister, is that you don't understand the extent of the problem. Some 500,000 kids today in Ontario are growing up at risk. Either they are growing up in poverty or they are the subject of abuse or neglect or they have psychological or emotional problems.

We have five new studies that are talked about today in the media. Do you know what those studies are telling us? Things are getting worse for kids in Ontario. The rate of poverty for kids is going up; the rate of abuse and neglect is going up; the rate of psychological and emotional problems is going up; the number of inquests held into the death of kids who were killed by people who were supposed to care for them is going up.

Madam Minister, my question for you is, when are you really going to put kids at the top of the political agenda? When are you going to make them a priority for your government?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I can only assume that the honourable member didn't hear me when I said before that many of the recommendations that he has put in his report are already either recommended or under way, because we agree that many of them are very useful recommendations and mirror our thinking in many areas.

I think, though, it's important to recognize that while we acknowledge and are putting forward different strategies and programs to improve the lives of children in this province — for example, the healthy babies screening program through the cooperation of public health and municipalities is one — I should point out that the use of figures that predate this government, the use of figures that predate the economic growth and the more people in the job force that they are using, the use of figures that predate the decline in the number of children on welfare — I would respectfully ask the honourable member that if we're going to discuss this issue, if we're going to work together to improve the lives of children, which I think we would agree on, we should really pay more attention to using figures that are more appropriate to this discussion.

Mr McGuinty: All right, let's talk about what your government has done when it comes to kids. First of all, you have shut 60,000 four-year-olds out of junior kindergarten in the province, you have cut welfare payments for 500,000 kids in this province by 22% and, just a couple of weeks ago, your Premier was so vindictive and so cheap, he cut the food supplement to expectant mothers who find themselves on welfare by \$37 a month.

Here's an opportunity for you to tell me and to tell Ontarians at large that you really do care about kids. You understand that when you cut that \$37 a month what you're talking about is leading to a growth in low-birth-weight babies. That costs easily \$100,000 in terms of medical expenses, and low-birth-weight babies tend to have learning problems, tend to drop out of school and end up on social assistance. You understand all of that.

What you're going to do right now, Madam Minister, is you're going to stand up, you're going to tell us you're going to restore that supplement because it's good for kids and it makes good financial sense.

Hon Mrs Ecker: What this government is doing is responding to the words of experts like Dr Offert, whom I had the opportunity to listen to at a forum on child poverty in Durham, who talked about the barriers that kids have when they're on welfare. He looked at the future that those children have, the research and the statistics about how they have problems in education and problems all through their lives. We agree that kids living on welfare is a very bad thing for them. That's why we are working so hard to get those parents and those families off social assistance. We have over 108,000 fewer children on welfare today. I think that is good news for those kids. That's why we are doing the early learning study that the throne speech announced. That's why we are putting more money into intervention and prevention strategies to get those problems caught as early as we can.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Health and again this comes down to a question of trust. We can't trust the government to do the right thing when it comes to kids and we can't trust this government to do the right thing when it comes to health care. Let's look at the record here.

First you said you wouldn't close hospitals. You are. Then you said you wouldn't charge user fees for seniors and the poor. You have. Then you said you wouldn't cut health care. You've cut our hospital budgets by \$800 million. Then you said the cuts to health care wouldn't hurt patient care. They are. You have caused a patient care crisis in Ontario today. We've got patients stacked up in hospital corridors, we've got them being turned away from our emergency departments and we've got patients being discharged quicker and sicker. They should be staying in the hospital longer to recover and your cuts are causing them to be shipped out before they've had time to do that.

Tell me, Madam Minister, do you still maintain today, knowing all of that, that your cuts aren't hurting patient care in Ontario?

1410

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): Mr Speaker, through you to the leader of the official opposition, I would indicate that when we were elected in 1995 we were faced with a health system that unfortunately had been neglected by two previous governments. I am very pleased to say that we are redesigning the health system so we can respond to the needs of the population which you and I both know is changing; it is growing and it is rapidly aging.

Our government has taken significant steps to ensure that the priority services for people can be provided in this province. We have made new reinvestments into cardiac care, cancer care, hip and knee replacement, dialysis.

Every area where service has been required and needed, we are taking action to ensure that people in this province —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, your kind of action, when it comes to health care in this province, we can do without. You can talk about reform, you can talk about restructuring, you can talk about service improvements. I'm going to talk about patient care.

Let's talk for a moment about a few letters — in fact over 1,000 — that I have here, Madam Minister. Do you know where these letters happen to come from? They come from your neighbours. They come from Kitchener-Waterloo. You know what people are doing in these volumes of letters here? They're telling story after story about their mom or their dad or their son or their daughter or friends or loved ones who have been hurt by your health care system. It's as simple as that. They're showing up and they're not getting the kind of care that they are entitled to expect in Ontario.

My question for you is, when will you start listening to patients? When will you start listening to the neighbours you have in your community and start doing the right kind of thing to help improve health care for patients in Ontario?

Hon Mrs Witmer: We are taking action. I would just remind you of some of the headlines that were in the Toronto Star when your government was in office.

October 15, 1989: "Man, 62, Died of Heart Attack Waiting for Cardiac Operation: Health Minister Caplan Tells the Legislature She's Doing All She Can."

Again, November 10, 1988: "Wait for Surgery was Fatal for Husband, Widow Says." Again, Elinor Caplan.

Again, May 12, 1988: "Probe Launched over Wait at Toronto General Hospital." "Health Minister Caplan said, 'I've asked the ministry to investigate.'"

May 12, 1988: "Arthritis Sufferer on Hospital Waiting List: Pain-Wracked Man must Wait until 1990 for Operation."

These were headlines when your government was in power. These are issues that have not been addressed. Our government is moving forward to ensure that when these types of services are necessary for people in this province, the services will be there at every stage in their life and when they are needed.

Mr McGuinty: Madam Minister, you're in the driver's seat now. How much comfort do you think these old stories are to patients who are stacked up in hospital corridors today? How much comfort do you think they are to some mother who's worried about getting her child care in a timely way today? That stuff is over and gone. I can't believe you're raising that kind of stuff. You're in the driver's seat.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. Leader of the official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: Madam Minister, you and your government no longer have the trust of the people of this

province when it comes to delivering quality health care in Ontario.

You know what? Tomorrow, I'm off to London. I'm going to do a health care conference there. There is a group of people there who signed a petition. Do you know what the petition says, effectively? Cuts are hurting them. Guess how many people in London and the surrounding areas have signed that petition? Some 250,000 people have signed individual petitions saying that you are hurting them and their health care system. That's what your actions are doing. That's what you're doing to health care in Ontario. You are hurting patient care.

My question is this: When are you going to make it a real priority for your government to help patients in Ontario by delivering —

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon Mrs Witmer: Last week we made a very quick response to the situation of overcrowding of emergency rooms in this province. Again, I would quote from Dr Sutca who says, "Overflowing hospital emergency rooms are nothing new," and, "They have been a problem for almost 20 years." Yet it was our government that first brought forward recommendations last week.

We added \$225 million to the system last week in order to construct an interim 1,700 beds to accommodate people who are waiting in acute care facilities. We invested money into community care services. We are training nurses in emergency and critical care areas. We took a very significant step last week to ensure that the services for people in this province will be there, and we will continue, step by step, to redesign the system to —

The Speaker: Thank you very much.

Just a cautionary note to the member for Hamilton East and the member for Ottawa West. Will you please come to order. Heckling is out of order.

DISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question for the Attorney General. Attorney General, yesterday your colleague the Solicitor General stepped down because he recognized that an apparent breach of the criminal law happened last Thursday in the reading of the throne speech. He stepped down and said that he was prepared to cooperate with any police investigation. The Premier acknowledged that. The only problem is that you, as the chief law officer of the crown in Ontario, have failed to do your duty.

I have now a letter from the RCMP that states very clearly that it is up to you to call for an independent investigation of the apparent breach of the criminal law which happened here last Thursday. Mr Attorney General, are you going to do your job now? Are you going to call for an independent police investigation of the events so that we can get to the bottom of what happened and who is responsible?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): This morning the Deputy

Attorney General received a copy of a letter from the RCMP to the leader of the third party, Mr Hampton. The letter explains that the RCMP will not normally investigate a case like this without the approval of officials in the Ministry of the Attorney General. I am informed that in accordance with established ministry policy, the assistant deputy attorney general for criminal law has reviewed the facts. He has requested that the RCMP review this matter to determine the appropriate course of action.

Mr Hampton: At long last, five days after the event, the Attorney General of Ontario finally recognizes his responsibility, not as a partisan cabinet minister but as an independent agent, as the chief law officer of the crown.

Minister, I want to ask you this: It was very clear from the information we obtained yesterday that the Solicitor General did not write the throne speech. It was very clear that the throne speech was written in the Premier's office by the Premier's advisers. We were given information from officials in the Ministry of the Solicitor General that said that advice had gone to the Premier's office: "Don't include this name in the throne speech. It may lead to the identification of a young offender, which is contrary to the criminal law of Canada."

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question, please.

Mr Hampton: Can you tell us, Mr Attorney General, will the police investigation include the Premier, the Premier's office and the advisers to the Premier?

1420

Hon Mr Harnick: The assistant Deputy Attorney General for criminal law has requested that the RCMP review this matter to determine the appropriate course of action. The course of the review will be up to the law enforcement officials at the RCMP. We do not direct them. They will take the appropriate steps to review the matter.

Mr Hampton: I want to help the Attorney General get to the bottom of this. He avoided the issue for five days, so I want to give him some help.

This is an article from the Toronto Star dated April 18. It's entitled "Mr Fix-it."

"Trading his sledgehammer for a paint brush, key Tory strategist David Lindsay...."

Then it says in the second paragraph, "...Lindsay, Mike Harris' main man since 1990 and one of the key people drafting Thursday's speech from the throne."

This is an article from Ontario Legislative Highlights by one Tory insider, Sally Barnes, which says, "Next week's speech from the throne, to be read by Hilary Weston, the Lieutenant Governor, was apparently drafted by chief Harris strategist Deb Hutton."

Can you tell me, please, since these are the people who drafted the throne speech, will the investigation include David Lindsay and Deb Hutton, who work in the Premier's office?

Hon Mr Harnick: Again, elected officials such as myself do not direct law enforcement agencies as to how to investigate. An allegation has been made, it has been referred to the RCMP, and the RCMP will review the

matter and determine the appropriate course of action. There really is very little else to say.

The Speaker: New question, third party. Leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: I beg to differ, Speaker; there is a lot more to say.

Mr Attorney General, when I was the Attorney General for Ontario —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock.

Can you please come to order. Leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: Apparently the Conservative members of the Legislature don't understand that they are only temporarily the government. In a democracy, you won't be the government much longer.

Attorney General, there was a protocol in place in the Ministry of the Attorney General which dealt with situations where allegations were raised against cabinet ministers. I want to ask you, is that protocol still in place in Ontario, a protocol which is to be followed whenever allegations are raised against a particular cabinet minister or the Premier? Is that protocol still in place?

Hon Mr Harnick: Last Thursday, upon learning that there were concerns arising from the throne speech, I immediately asked senior officials for their legal advice. They were in the process of reviewing this matter when the leader of the third party referred it to the RCMP. Once the matter had been referred to the RCMP, further ministerial action was held in abeyance.

Now we know that the RCMP has reported back to the member, indicating that they needed approval of officials in the Ministry of the Attorney General. The assistant Deputy Attorney General for criminal law, in accordance with the protocol, has reviewed the facts and has referred it to the RCMP and requested that the RCMP review the matter. That's exactly what was done.

Mr Hampton: It's evident that officials at the Ministry of the Attorney General have given this Attorney General a crash course overnight. That's very evident. But you didn't answer my question. What I asked you is, there has been in the past a protocol in place in the Ministry of the Attorney General which deals with situations where allegations are brought against the Premier or are brought against a fellow cabinet minister.

I'll ask the question again: Is that protocol still in place? If it is still in place, why did you not follow it last Thursday, last Friday, last Saturday, last Sunday or yesterday? Why did it take until now? And, Minister, would you table that protocol in the Legislature for us so we can determine what that protocol says you should have done?

Hon Mr Harnick: As I said in response to the last question, last Thursday when allegations arose, I referred those allegations immediately to senior officials. They were in the process of reviewing this matter when the leader of the third party called the RCMP. They then held this review in abeyance until this morning when the response from the RCMP was received.

The protocol has been followed. This matter has been in the hands of the assistant deputy minister responsible for criminal law, who makes the decisions in this matter, and that's exactly what's been done here.

Mr Hampton: I think what I heard here is that the Attorney General sat and waited to see what the opposition would do. I think that's the truth that emerges from the answers — which were non-answers — yesterday, and from the attempt to now cover it over today.

What I don't understand is this: When it comes to going after poor people and accusing them of health care fraud, your government is right there. When it comes to going after injured workers and accusing them of fraud with respect to the Workers' Compensation Board, your government is right there. When it comes to going after children who don't have enough to eat, when it comes to going after the poorest people in Ontario and accusing them of welfare fraud, your government is right there. Here we had last Thursday, open on the face of the record, a clear breach of the criminal law —

The Speaker: Question.

Mr Hampton: — and you have done nothing until you were forced to do it. Is this one law for the poor in Ontario, one law for injured workers, and a different law for Conservative —

The Speaker: Attorney General.

Hon Mr Harnick: The matter has been referred to the RCMP. It was initially referred by the member. The RCMP did not proceed on that basis. The assistant deputy minister responsible for criminal law has taken the immediate step of referring this properly to the RCMP. That is what's being done, and I have no further comment.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

My question is for the Minister of Transportation. You will know that every year, far too many people are dying needlessly at Ontario intersections. You will also know that a number of municipalities around the province now are looking to you to give them a hand to enforce the law. We've got people running red lights. We've got people who are being injured. People are being killed in these accidents.

They're looking to you for a bit of help. They don't even want any money. They want authorization so that they can bring into effect red-light cameras. Will you give them a hand? Will you provide them with that authorization?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Transportation): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. In fact this government does want to target aggressive driving behaviour on our highways and also on our roadways. That is why we are looking for proposals from the municipalities that target the aggressive driver not only through fines but also affecting the aggressive driver's demerit points and insurance rates. That is the most effective way to target that behaviour, and that's what this government is for.

Mr McGuinty: I interpret from that response that you are not going to give them permission to put into place red-light cameras. If I'm interpreting that in the wrong way, I want you to tell me that.

Municipalities have studied this. These red-light cameras have been used elsewhere, in Australia, Switzerland, the United States and Germany. Municipalities have taken it upon themselves to study this issue and have made a determination that this would be a very effective instrument in reducing fatalities and injuries as a result of people running red lights. All I want to know from you now, Minister, is will you or will you not give our municipalities the right to install red-light cameras?

Hon Mr Clement: Again, our concern is to target the aggressive driver and that aggressive driving behaviour. As the member well knows, when you take a photograph —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Member for Lake Nipigon.

Hon Mr Clement: I think the target of our actions should be that aggressive driver. You lose the ability when you take a photograph of the plate. You lose the ability to issue demerit points. You lose the ability to jack up that aggressive driver's insurance rates.

In answer to the question, this government is not in favour of any form of technology that does not target the driver, and merely targets the owner. That is the answer to the question. But this government is going to work very hard with the municipalities to ensure that we target the aggressive driver and ensure our roads are safer. That is the goal of this government.

1430

DISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is for the Solicitor General, and I suppose I should congratulate the Solicitor General on his new job. I have a very simple question for the new Solicitor General. Is it normal procedure for your ministry to provide the Premier's office with the names of young offenders?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Labour, Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): I thank the honourable member for the question. As the member knows, the RCMP have indicated they will proceed with an investigation and that's an area that would be a subject of that investigation so I am not going to comment on it.

Mr Hampton: I was very clear in my question. I did not ask about a particular incident. I asked a general question. Is it normal procedure for the Ministry of the Solicitor General to provide the Premier's office with the names of young offenders? That's a very general question. I'm asking you about normal procedure. You should know the normal procedure of your ministry. You are now the Solicitor General.

Since you didn't answer that question, I ask it again, but I want to ask you this as well: Will you commit to the Legislature right now to establish procedures that will guarantee in the future that the Premier's office cannot run roughshod over the laws of Canada and does not have access to the names of young offenders?

Hon Mr Flaherty: At the request of the leader of the third party, an investigative process has been put into place which I imagine would include those areas with respect to which he is inquiring. For those reasons, I will not comment on them.

AGRICULTURAL FUNDING

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): My question is directed to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. This government is on track to bury the sorry legacy of deficits run up by previous NDP and Liberal governments. They were also the governments that cut the agricultural budgets. There are calls by farmers of Ontario and from Northumberland — they were in to visit me on March 27 — to reinvest in agriculture. Minister, can you assure my constituents that this government is committed to the agrifood sector?

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I want to thank my colleague from Northumberland. Yes, the Ontario government is very much determined to strengthen and maintain a strong agrifood sector.

To start, we've reversed the —

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Member for Ottawa West, will you come to order, please.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: We have reversed the trend of former governments of reducing the amount that the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has had to spend. We spend as much on agrifood research and development as the province of Quebec and the province of Alberta together — \$41 million. Last October we launched a \$30-million rural job strategy fund — very successful, many projects going. We invested \$3 million to create 3,000 summer jobs last year. We funded 4,200. We were right there with money for ice storm victims of eastern Ontario within a week.

We are committed to the agrifood sector. It's a very important part of our economy.

Mr Galt: Minister, that indeed is an impressive list. What has been the result and how does this government's commitment to the agrifood sector stack up against our previous governments?

Hon Mr Villeneuve: I recall a Liberal government from 1985 to 1990 which said it would double the expenditures on agriculture. Two years later they transferred the farm tax rebate from Municipal Affairs to Agriculture to make it look good — a little bit of smoke and mirrors.

The NDP answer to that was to shut down two of our agricultural colleges.

Let me quote from the throne speech.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): Did the Premier's office tell you to do this? Don't do it.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): You better check with Guy Giorno.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: I am proud to quote from the speech from the throne: "Agriculture and food industries leading the nation in farm cash receipts and value-added...production."

In the fiscal year 1996-97 we exported \$5.6 billion of agrifood products to the world, fully 170% more than a decade ago. For every billion dollars that we export, there are between 12,000 and 15,000 jobs. That is very important and that is why this government will continue to fully support the agrifood sector.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): My question is for the Minister of Health. I'd like you to stand up and be accountable for closing three hospitals yesterday. Your destruction commission shut down Toronto Grace hospital, Runnymede Hospital and Riverdale Hospital.

Further, your commission ordered the closure of 3,500 chronic-care beds, and in their place you might, you maybe, you perhaps will put some long-term-care beds which will have the hotel services but won't provide medical services to people, and you're doing it, Minister, because it costs \$100 a day there and today it costs at least \$250 a day for the very important services they are getting at Runnymede and at Riverdale.

Minister, I want you to make an assurance to those 700 patients in those hospitals that are closing, those 3,500 patients you've decided can be dispersed somewhere else. They want to hear from you. Will you guarantee that the medical care they get will be as good or better wherever you try and send them? Will you guarantee it today?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): As the member knows, we are restructuring health services in order that we can respond to the very specific needs of people in this province, so part of the task of moving forward is to ensure that each individual receives the appropriate level of care. Certainly I would indicate to you that those individuals who need chronic care, need rehabilitation care, need long-term care, need support in their homes, our government is going to make sure the appropriate level of service is provided.

1440

Mr Kennedy: Here's what one of the nurses at North York General who wrote to you recently thinks of what you've been doing. They've seen many changes, little planning, much chaos, and a deterioration of patient care.

Minister, we're going to hold you accountable to your words of a few minutes ago because there are patients like this one from my riding who is in Runnymede Hospital where she is receiving superior care. Her daughter writes to say that the disease, which is Alzheimer's and multi-infarct dementia, is sad but what's worse is to have a

government evict her from her home, because that's what you propose to do. You gave the power to the commission that is closing that hospital.

I want you to guarantee that the care that is going to be given will not be diminished in any way whatsoever, and when you do that, I want you to tell us how much money will follow these patients. Will they get the same amount of money to be cared for in future as they do today?

Hon Mrs Witmer: As our government moves forward with the restructuring of health care, we are specifically responding to the needs of people in this province, needs that I indicate again have been sadly neglected by past governments. We will be providing to individuals the appropriate level of care that is going to be required in order that it is consistent with the needs that they have.

COMPENSATION FOR HEPATITIS C PATIENTS

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is for the Minister of Health. We all know the pain and suffering that victims of Canada's tainted blood system have had to endure, and we know that those who were infected with hepatitis C from tainted blood have been waiting for years for a decision on compensation. When we were the government we supported the formation of the Krever commission to look into, to investigate all of what happened with that tainted blood scandal and to make recommendations to us, which we were committed to follow, for compensation for the victims of that tainted blood.

Minister, 85% of Canadians support a fair and compassionate compensation for these victims. Mr Justice Krever urged that governments be compassionate, not that they stick with legalistic versions of what kind of liability they might have.

I want you to tell us, why did you ignore the Krever report? Why did you sign on to a compensation package that arbitrarily excluded anywhere from 20,000 to 30,000 victims of the tainted blood scandal?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): As the member knows, there were ongoing deliberations and discussions by health ministers throughout the Dominion of Canada, including Mr Rock, the provinces and the territories. There was very careful analysis done of the Krever report, of all the information that was provided, and after that very, very careful deliberation there was a decision made and an assistance package was provided and agreed to by all of those individuals at the meeting.

Mrs Boyd: You have to accept the responsibility then for your broken promise to haemophiliacs in this province who were infected with hepatitis C through the tainted blood. You promised them, on February 11, when you finally met with them — your predecessor of course refused to meet with them — that whatever the settlement was, for sure haemophiliacs in Ontario would be fairly compensated, would be compassionately compensated for the pain and suffering they are experiencing because of hepatitis C they received in tainted blood.

You've broken your word to them. You have refused to listen to them since. You won't answer phone calls, you won't see them. You have simply dropped all of your responsibility at the door. There are not a great number of them. Where is your compassion and where is your commitment to these people that you made directly?

Hon Mrs Witmer: To set the record straight, I think it's important to take into consideration the fact that when the discussions regarding the package of assistance began, there was no indication that there would be support for haemophiliacs. Actually, it was this province that indicated that there was a need to include haemophiliacs in the final package. I had indicated to them at a meeting that we would certainly bring forward that point of view, and I'm pleased to say that Ontario did take a leadership role in ensuring that the haemophiliacs would be included in the final assistance package, and they have been.

Furthermore, with regard to requests for meetings, there have been ongoing meetings by those groups of individuals with the ministry staff and with my own personal staff as well.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. I read with great interest today Ms Leatherdale's article in the Toronto Sun. According to that article, Canada's senior investment managers were polled and 81% of them ranked Ontario as the best place in the country to invest. They obviously used some rationale, some research behind that poll. What hard evidence do you have that Ontario is the best place to live, work and invest?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The members for Ottawa West and Hamilton East, come to order, please. Minister.

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): I would like to thank the member for Brampton North for the question. The Fraser Institute survey just confirms what we already know, that Ontario is booming. Private forecasters such as the Conference Board, Toronto-Dominion Bank and Bank of Montreal are all projecting Ontario to become one of the fastest-growing economies in Canada over the next year. In the last four months alone, over 80,000 net new private sector jobs were created. Ontario's job gains represent over two thirds of the jobs that have been created in Canada, although Ontario only has one third of the population.

Our plan is working, and getting the deficit under control, eliminating red tape and cutting taxes has gotten our province's economy going again. The proof is in the numbers, the job numbers.

Mr Spina: Out of that two thirds that you talked about, I am seeing in my own riding some evidence of this change that our government has brought into place. In my own riding, Chrysler Canada will be bringing on its third shift at the end of next month. That's 1,000 more CAW

men and women who will be working and contributing to the economy of our province.

What are you doing to help ensure that Ontario will continue to be the leader in attracting these quality new investments in our province?

Hon Mr Palladini: Our government is 100% committed to making sure that Ontario is first in the minds of all potential investors. Our ministry is constantly generating leads and promoting Ontario's improved business climate to investors, not only here but also abroad.

Last Friday I had the pleasure of attending a groundbreaking ceremony where Showa Corp of Japan is installing a plant up in Schomberg Ontario which eventually will employ 80 people.

In the fall, Honda will open up its new expansion project, creating an additional 1,200 jobs in Ontario. Places like S&P Data Corp will hire 500 new people for a call centre in St Catharines. In London, Philips Lighting is going to hire an additional 75 people because of their expansion project.

Finally, I want to say to my colleagues in the House that if I have to get on a plane, on a train, on a bus, I will go wherever it's going to take me to bring investment to Ontario.

1450

TUITION FEES

Mr David Caplan (Orillia): My question is for the Minister of Education and Training. In December's financial statement, your colleague the Minister of Finance announced a policy that we fundamentally disagree with. He announced the government's intention to allow the deregulation of tuition for professional and graduate programs, starting September 1998. To date, there has been no announcement from your ministry as to which programs are going to be deregulated and how much tuitions are going to rise.

Students are registering now for programs that start in the fall. Their hands are tied because they can't anticipate tuition fees that they will be expected to pay. In an April 18 article in the Globe and Mail you were quoted as saying that you didn't have a particular time frame for announcing the parameters. Minister, how long do you think students, and quite frankly colleges and universities, should have to wait for you to get your act together? Come on. Come clean with us today. Isn't this just another funding formula fiasco?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): What this is all about is looking at increased opportunities for our young people in our post-secondary institutions, in our colleges, in our universities. There's any amount of evidence, for example, that in certain areas, such as electrical engineering, computer science, computer engineering, there is a great shortage of opportunity, that in the real world there are many openings, many opportunities. The private sector would like to hire more computer scientists, more electrical engineers, but they can't find the opportunities through the post-secondary institutions.

We are working very closely with the colleges, with the universities, to look at a program that will allow for more opportunities for our young people. At the same time, I will say that many of the colleges and universities —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon David Johnson: — have gone ahead, have set their fees for next year and those students know precisely what fees are in order.

Mr Caplan: You're completely out of touch because your answer is not even close. We have to be concerned. Students need to know what tuition fees will be for the programs they plan to start in September. What do you plan to do? Sandbag them in August with the news that you finally decided what fees they're going to pay, that they're going to double or triple?

Come on. Don't you think this should be announced prior to the budget? You know that this decision is going to have an impact on OSAP dollars for this fiscal year. Your lack of concern is irresponsible and yet is another indication of a lack of commitment and a lack of interest by your government towards our post-secondary institutions and towards students. I've got to ask you again, Minister, when will you give our institutions, especially our students, the information that they need and that they deserve?

Hon David Johnson: We are today dealing with a funding arrangement that essentially has been passed through from a Liberal government to an NDP government to this particular government. We are trying to make sense out of this arrangement. We are trying to increase the number of opportunities for our young people. We're working very hard on that. We are working with the colleges, we are working with the universities.

I believe there's great room for improvement. I believe there is an initiative that can come forward which will allow for more opportunities in the particular persuasions that I've mentioned, particularly electrical engineering and computer science. We have given the universities and the colleges the latitude to increase —

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon David Johnson: — five and five this upcoming year, five and five the year after that, provided they improve the quality of the education experience at our post-secondary institutions.

CHILD WELFARE

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services with respect to concern about the state of your welfare reforms. Children's service advocates, including the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, are asking a couple of pretty blunt questions. They want to know, first of all, why has there been a delay in releasing the report of Judge Mary Jane Hutton and the expert panel reviewing the Child and Family Services Act, consultant Barry Lewis on the ministry's accountability for child welfare and the review of 3,000 case files. Second, why was there

not one mention of this government's commitment to improving child welfare in the throne speech?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): First of all, regarding the throne speech, one of the strong messages that we have been hearing from child experts is that in order to prevent families and children from ending up at the door of a children's aid society, we must have more supports, more intervention and prevention programs to catch the problems earlier, if you will. That's one of the reasons we have increased spending in the intervention-prevention area.

Our Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program, as I mentioned earlier, is one where, through public health units, we will be screening newborns to try and identify them at that particular time so that we can get the supports to that family then. I think that's one important thing to try and prevent people from ending up at the child welfare door.

Second, there has been no delay in releasing the reports. Those reports will be released. That has been our indication since we first commissioned them. But I think it's also important to note that they're all interrelated because they're looking at different things and —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Ms Lankin: Minister, in fact word on the street is that the child advocates' report, which is going to be released tomorrow, has been held up for over a month by your ministry's failure to respond and holding things up and holding up responses. Second, we've got the Ontario Child Mortality Task Force Recommendation: A Progress Report, released today. So the two outside reports in outside independent agencies' hands have been released. The three reports that your ministry has been sitting on are necessary to complete the picture.

Minister, will you give us a commitment today that you will table those three reports in this Legislature tomorrow so that we have the full picture and are able to judge what progress is or isn't being made with respect to child welfare?

We fully support any initiative that gets that prevention. But you know, there are some kids who are at the child welfare door now and they are being put at risk by the cuts your government has made. The associations themselves have indicated that the funds that were announced in last year's budget go nowhere near replacing the 455 staff that were cut.

The Speaker: Question.

Ms Lankin: Kids are at risk because of your government's actions. Will you table those reports? Will you restore those budgets and staff to the agencies?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Again, it has been our intention and it will be our intention that those reports will be released publicly as soon as we are ready to do that, after we have gotten some very good answers and some policy work in place to respond to those recommendations.

Second, what we are doing to fix the child welfare system, there is no secret about that. We have announced those steps as they have been made: everything from the new money, which has meant over 200 new front-line

staff; the new risk assessment process, and the training is occurring even as we speak for those many front-line workers; trying to improve the education that those child welfare workers get; the review of the legislation. We know we need to change that. There's a whole range of steps that we have taken and will continue to take.

It's interesting that the report that was released today by the child mortality task force talks about the progress that is made.

The final point is we do not control the timing of reports or of anything that the child advocates office may wish to do.

SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): My question is for the Minister of Education and Training. Many dedicated teachers have expressed concerns to me about the course of study for their students. Employers I speak with tell me they need workers with an excellent command of the English language as well as a solid background in science and math. However, many of the recent graduates they interview do not meet the standards set by these firms. What is our government doing to help students meet these standards?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): I thank the member for Perth for this question. This is a concern for the curriculum of parents and employers and students, I might say. In particular, our students do not accomplish, I think on national and international tests, what our parents hope that they might be able to accomplish.

I am pleased that this government has moved forward with regard to curriculum improvement at the elementary level: the language curriculum last fall with more rigour; the literacy test, which has been announced for the secondary school; the mathematics curriculum has been announced and implemented last fall at the elementary level, a program which used the excellent mathematics programs from the western provinces — BC, Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan — and was implemented with specific expectations in mathematics at each grade and a consistency right across the province; finally, the science and technology curriculum, which I'm very proud of, which we released very recently.

1500

Mr Bert Johnson: Minister, I don't think that math and language have changed very much since I was in school, but advances in science and technology have been phenomenal. How is the new science and technology curriculum an improvement over previous versions?

Hon David Johnson: I don't know precisely how much math and language have changed, but I know that science and technology have changed, particularly the technology component. The science component has been updated. For the first time in 30 years we have a new science curriculum, which was recently announced, and for the first time ever we have a technology curriculum which has been announced and which will be in place this

fall at the elementary level with specific expectations at every grade — grade 1 right through grade 8.

We have an earth and space component which for the first time will teach our young people about astronomy and soils and minerals and all the other components of earth and space. The students will learn about the theory, which is the science, and they'll learn about the practical applications which pertain to technology.

I want to thank York University and the 17 school boards. They did a fabulous job on the science and technology curriculum.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): My question is to the Minister of Health. Let me quote from your throne speech of last week. You indicated, "People who work hard and pay taxes — or who have settled into retirement after a lifetime of doing the same — demand that government guarantee health care that is not only modern but available...."

Minister, I have a great number of constituents in my riding wanting to know why they are spending time in jail rather than a hospital bed. You will know that psychiatric patients needing health care after 5 o'clock in the evening during the weekdays or on weekends are being put in jail rather than into a hospital bed. How can this be, when you've indicated that the government is not only guaranteeing health care, but health care that is modern and available? How can you say that to my constituents who are spending time in jail rather than in a hospital bed?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): We certainly had recognized several months ago that the mental health strategy in the province of Ontario needed to be reviewed, based on those type of situations and certainly other concerns that had been brought to our attention.

I asked the parliamentary assistant, Dan Newman, to do a review of the mental health strategy. There were consultations held with hundreds of people throughout the province. There were submissions that were received by Mr Newman and we are now in the position that we will be announcing the results of those deliberations. We will be indicating where we plan to go in the area of mental health reform and we will be making announcements to ensure that the appropriate level of service can be provided to those individuals, that the appropriate community support will be there and also the appropriate care providers. We hope to very soon be making announcements regarding the mental health strategy.

Mr Miclash: This issue has been going on since last February. Very soon is not soon enough for patients who are spending their evenings, their weekends in jail when they should be in a bed in one of our hospitals in today's Ontario. Minister, you just don't get it. We don't need another study; we don't need a report on this. I need your commitment today to ensure that we will reintroduce these services so I don't have to go home and face families who have had family members locked up in jail rather than

where they belong — in a psychiatric unit in northwestern Ontario. Minister, can I have that commitment from you, to turn this around, and for immediate action so that this weekend we will not see psychiatric patients locked up in the jails of northwestern Ontario?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I'm aware of the situation that is faced and I would indicate to you that I will make sure that ministry staff are instructed to investigate and make whatever arrangements they can as quickly as possible.

PETITIONS

CONDITION D'UNE ÉCOLE

M. Gilles E. Morin (Carleton-Est) : J'ai une pétition présentée par 441 représentants de ma circonscription, et elle se lit comme suit :

«À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

«Attendu que le bâtiment vétuste de 43 ans occupé par l'école Nouveaux-Horizons depuis six ans devait être temporaire et avait été condamné en 1983 ;

«Attendu qu'il n'y a aucun gymnase et que des déficiences majeures existent dans la bibliothèque, la salle d'ordinateurs, la salle d'art et la salle de musique ;

«Nous, les soussignés, pétitionnons l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario comme suit :

«De libérer des fonds pour permettre la construction d'une nouvelle école catholique française à Gloucester dans le secteur de Chapel Hill.»

J'y appose ma signature.

CHIROPRACTIC HEALTH CARE

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislature, to Premier Mike Harris and also to Health Minister Elizabeth Witmer:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health has recently strengthened its reputation as the ministry of medicine through its \$1.7-billion three-year agreement with the Ontario Medical Association; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is restricting access to alternative cost-saving treatments for patients of the province; and

"Whereas two recent reports commissioned by the Ministry of Health called for increased OHIP funding to improve patient access to chiropractic services, on the grounds of safety, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness; and

"Whereas over one million Ontario adults now use chiropractic services annually, increasingly those with higher incomes because of the cost barrier caused by government underfunding; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has shown blatant disregard for the needs of the citizens of Ontario in restricting funding for chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to recognize the contribution made by chiropractors to

the good health of the people of Ontario, to recognize the taxpayer dollars saved by the use of low-cost preventive care such as that provided by chiropractors, and to recognize that to restrict funding for chiropractic health care only serves to limit access to a needed health care service."

I've signed my name, along with Dr Madeline Crnek, a chiropractor in Windsor, to this petition.

STATUS OF BILL 119

Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York): I have a petition addressed to the Legislature. It reads as follows:

"Being that Bill 119, the proposed Red Tape Reduction Act, 1997, was not introduced prior to the end of the last sitting of the Ontario Legislature;

"Being that the act's aim was to reduce red tape by amending or appealing certain statutes administered by the Ministry of Natural Resources, especially in relation to the Conservation Authorities Act;

"Being that the contents of the bill are of vital importance to the operations of conservation authorities across Ontario;

"Be it resolved that the undersigned petition the Legislature that the aims, principles, purposes and contents of the proposed Bill 119 be reintroduced into this House in this session in the appropriate manner at the Ministry of Natural Resources's earliest convenience."

I affix my signature to this.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): This petition is most appropriate, with two municipal representatives from Niagara in the members' gallery. It reads as follows, signed by a large number of people:

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has announced its intention of dumping the financing for ambulances, social housing and public health care services on to the backs of municipalities; and

"Whereas this irresponsible action will create a shortfall of more than \$42 million for local governments in St Catharines and the Niagara region; and

"Whereas local representatives in St Catharines and the Niagara region will be forced to either raise property taxes by as much as \$200 per household or cut services; and

"Whereas Mike Harris called municipal representatives 'whiners' when they tried to explain to him that his proposal was unfair and would create gaps in important services such as the delivery of public health care; and

"Whereas the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing accused local representatives of being opportunistic simply because they attempted to point out that the Mike Harris proposal was unfair and primarily designed to fund his ill-advised tax scheme; and

"Whereas the Harris government refuses to listen to the representatives who work most closely with their constituents;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Mike Harris government to scrap its downloading plan, which will cause either an increase in property taxes or an unacceptable cut to important services."

I affix my signature to the many signatures that are on this petition from the Niagara region.

1510

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I present to the Legislature a petition forwarded to me by Cec Makowski, administrative vice-president of the Ontario region of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada, signed by many of their members in the Hamilton and surrounding areas.

"Whereas approximately 300 workers are killed on the job each year and 400,000 suffer work-related injuries and illnesses; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario continues to allow a massive erosion of WCB prevention funding; and

"Whereas Ontario workers are fearful that the government of Ontario, through its recent initiatives, is threatening to dismantle workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Whereas the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre have consistently provided a meaningful role for labour within the health and safety prevention system; and

"Whereas the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre have proven to be the most cost-effective prevention organizations funded by the WCB;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately cease the assault on the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Further, we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure that the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre remain labour-driven organizations, with full and equitable WCB funding, and that the WCB provide adequate prevention funding to eliminate workplace illness and injury."

On this national day of mourning for workers injured and dying on the job, I hope that government members have listened to the plea of these workers.

ABORTION

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario has exclusive authority to determine what service will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for performing of abortions."

This is signed by about 1,530 people on 54 pages from my riding and close by, and I'll sign it too.

CHIROPRACTIC HEALTH CARE

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislature addressed to Premier Mike Harris, Health Minister Elizabeth Witmer and members of the Ontario Legislature.

"Whereas the Ministry of Health has recently strengthened its reputation as the ministry of medicine through its \$1.7-billion three-year agreement with the Ontario Medical Association; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is restricting access to alternative, cost-saving treatments for patients of the province; and

"Whereas two recent reports commissioned by the Ministry of Health called for increased OHIP funding to improve patient access to chiropractic services, on the grounds of safety, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness; and

"Whereas over one million Ontario adults now use chiropractic services annually, increasingly those with higher incomes because of the cost barrier caused by government underfunding; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has shown blatant disregard for the needs of the citizens of Ontario in restricting funding for chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize the contribution made by chiropractors to the good health of the people of Ontario, to recognize the taxpayer dollars saved by the use of low-cost preventive care such as that provided by chiropractors, and to recognize that to restrict funding for chiropractic health care only serves to limit access to a needed health care service."

I submit this petition on their behalf.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): I have a petition that is especially fitting today, the day of mourning. It's with respect to Workers' Health and Safety Centre clinics.

"Whereas approximately 300 workers are killed on the job each year and 400,000 suffer work-related injuries and illnesses; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario continues to allow a massive erosion of WCB prevention funding; and

"Whereas Ontario workers are fearful that the government of Ontario, through its recent initiatives, is threatening to dismantle workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Whereas the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre have consistently provided a meaningful role for labour within the health and safety prevention system; and

"Whereas the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre have proven to be the most cost-effective prevention organizations funded by the WCB;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately cease the assault on the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Further, we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure that the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre remain labour-driven organizations, with full and equitable WCB funding, and that the WCB provide adequate prevention funding to eliminate workplace illness and injury."

I have added my name to that petition as well.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I have a petition signed by a number of Ontarians and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas all schools in Ontario should be safe learning and working environments; and

"Whereas all Ontarians should be assured that safe school programs are in place in all Ontario schools; and

"Whereas...a private member's bill entitled An Act to Promote Safety in Ontario Schools and Create Positive Learning Environments for Ontario Students, 1998; and

"Whereas" this "bill will:

"Require all boards in Ontario to design and implement school safety programs, school codes of conduct, and anti-vandalism policies;

"Provide for effective early intervention strategies by requiring boards to design and implement anti-bullying policies and by providing boards with the ability to direct psychological assessments of students that they believe are at risk;

"Provide a provincial violence and weapons-free schools policy and allow boards the ability to exclude violent students from regular classroom settings;

"Give police the tools they need by creating a new provincial offence for trespassing on school property and backing it up with real consequences;

"Direct all boards in Ontario to design and implement alternative education programs for suspended and excluded students;

"Require parents to be liable for any damage done to school property by their children; and

"Protect teachers and staff from civil liability;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To pass into law" the "Safe Schools Act as quickly as possible."

I have affixed my name to this petition because it is a worthy one.

ABORTION

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): J'ai ici une pétition qui provient de plusieurs municipalités de Prescott et Russell :

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas it is vital that occupational health and safety services provided to workers be conducted by organizations in which workers have faith; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre has provided such services on behalf of workers for many years; and

"Whereas the centre has made a significant contribution to improvements in workplace health and safety and the reduction of injuries, illnesses and death caused by work;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose any attempt to erode the structure, services or funding of the Workers' Health and Safety Centre.

"Further, we, the undersigned, demand that the education and training of Ontario workers continue in its present form through the Workers' Health and Safety Centre."

I proudly add my name to those of these workers.

UNITED EMPIRE LOYALISTS

Mr Harry Danford (Hastings-Peterborough):

"Whereas it is important to recognize the important role that the United Empire Loyalists have played and their descendants continue to play in our province's history and development; and

"Whereas the multicultural Loyalist heritage is one that belongs to all citizens of Ontario; and

"Whereas the passage into law of private member's Bill Pr150, An Act proclaiming United Empire Loyalists' Day, establishes June 19 of every year as a day to celebrate that heritage and to acknowledge the ongoing contributions that the descendants of the Loyalists continue to make to Ontario society;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the government of Ontario ensure that a suitable learning unit on the United Empire Loyalists be included in the history curriculum for Ontario schools."

I affix my signature as well.

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ACCESS TO LEGISLATIVE BUILDING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of privilege, Madam Speaker: Around the building, we have a number of signs which prevent the public from having access to certain parts of the building. It's my understanding, and you may know about this, that there was a committee of the three parties which was involved in the development of this particular policy.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Order, please. I need to hear the point of privilege.

Mr Bradley: What has happened as a result is that everywhere you go in this building now the public, whom you and I represent, the good people of Riverdale, the good people of St Catharines, and of all the ridings in the Niagara Peninsula —

Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview): The people of Downsview.

Mr Bradley: — Downsview included, people who try to get around this building, if they go on the third floor, second floor or first floor, even where they come in one of the doors, what happens is that they are confronted with a sign that says "Staff Only," even in our library, which you know to be something we should be very proud of, and those various signs on the walls, the lovely maps on the walls and so on. I hope you will investigate that.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for St Catharines, thank you very much for your point of privilege, but it is not a point of privilege. Perhaps I'll recommend that you take it up with the Speaker later. Now, moving on, orders of the day.

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): I want to pay tribute to the member for St Catharines for that very excellent stall, but we would have granted you a recess, if you had just asked, until the leader came.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

DÉBAT SUR LE DISCOURS DU TRÔNE

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for an address in reply to the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): I understand that we do have consent not to run the clock, as a courtesy to the leaders of the official opposition and the third party.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Agreed? Agreed. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. May I at the outset, before I join this debate, also thank my capable House leader for his usual highly expert strategies in terms of helping us move things along and for ensuring I could be present here to participate in this debate. I think it's a good opportunity for us to review the government record, during my response to the throne speech, and to outline some of what we stand for here as members of the Ontario Liberal Party.

The first thing we should look back at is what has happened during the past four months when this House was not sitting. The clock obviously didn't come to a standstill. Things continued to unfold in Mike Harris's Ontario.

First of all, with respect to health care, we can see that both health care and patient care have continued to deteriorate in Ontario. Let's put it this way: I don't think there are many Ontarians left today who have not been touched by the cold hand of Mike Harris when it comes to health care in our province. There just aren't many people left who haven't got some kind of a story to tell about a neighbour or your mom's neighbour or someone within your own immediate family, somebody who has gone to a hospital and found there was this long waiting line at the emergency ward. They've heard about ambulances that were forced to bypass the emergency ward because it was too crowded. They've heard about how long it took to get treatment. They've heard about people who have been stacked up in hospital corridors because there weren't enough beds inside the hospital because of the cuts Mike Harris has made to hospital budgets.

We've had the unfortunate responsibility here in opposition to raise questions in the Legislature before the House recessed, and we will continue to do so from here on in, about people who have been caught short by Mike Harris's health care. We've had the responsibility to raise the case of a man who actually died after waiting for hours in a hospital corridor for a cardiac bed.

The government has tried to make light of this. They said that the problem was connected with some seasonal fluctuations, that apparently every once in a while, I guess on kind of a regular basis, we see a greater increase in demand for hospital services, especially at the emergency wards. You know what? We have now heard from many

other experts who tell us that this isn't just a case of a seasonal fluctuation; it's not a case of more people suffering from the common cold or the flu. The patient care crisis we are living right now in Ontario is a direct result of hospital cuts, cuts by Mike Harris to our hospital budgets, and Ontarians understand that.

We should also look at what has happened to education in Ontario. We should look at the impact of cuts in that sector as well. We are now experiencing the death of adult education programs throughout the province. They have now caught up with Toronto and Ottawa, which were saved from it until the new funding formula kicked in. There are thousands and thousands of adults, especially young adults, 21 years of age, who said to themselves: "I've got my grade 9 and I can't make it, I can't get a job, unless I pull myself up by my own bootstraps, so I'm going on to high school. I want to complete my high schooling." What has the Premier done? What has Mike Harris done? He set up a funding formula that has shut them out of their classrooms.

We have also had, to date, 60,000 four-year-old children who have been deprived of junior kindergarten, and the jury has been in on this thing for a long time. Everybody understands that junior kindergarten is absolutely essential in a knowledge-based global economy. When our kids have junior kindergarten, they simply are better prepared to learn in the other grades, and they happen to do better in primary, secondary, college and university. For any out there who might think junior kindergarten is some kind of fancy baby-sitting, I want them to take that notion and throw it out of their minds. It's absolutely essential.

You know what? I was proud of the fact that the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, a few weeks back, came to Queen's Park and pleaded with Mike Harris to fund junior kindergarten. Even business understands that if you're going to cut it in this competitive world, you've got to have a highly skilled and educated workforce, which means you've got to have top-quality education, which means you've got to start with junior kindergarten. We're losing junior kindergarten in Ontario today.

Just take a look at what has happened to our universities. We have continued to experience tremendous difficulties there too. Over the last two years in North America, every other jurisdiction throughout the States and Canada has increased funding to the universities. What did we do in Ontario? We cut funding by 15%. On the other hand, we're allowing tuition fees to increase by 60%. In fact, the Premier has talked about deregulating tuition fees, so we have students who could be looking 100%, 200% and 300% increases in their tuition.

Let's for a moment pull back a little bit. Whenever any young person who has the ability to do so does not pursue post-secondary studies in our province, that is a loss to that student and that is a loss to every one of us. It's in our self-interest that every young person who can, does pursue post-secondary studies.

We've got students today who are telling us they're suffering from what we call sticker shock. That's where the price of whatever it is you're buying is so great that it

deters you from making the purchase and even properly considering it. We have young people in Ontario today who are saying to themselves, "I really would like to go on to university," or "I'd like to go on to college," and it's especially tough for young people who don't have a university or college in their home town and they've got to travel and they've got to find accommodation, pay the rent and the food and the travel and all the expenses associated with going to school out of town.

1530

Those young people are now looking at what has happened to other young people. They're saying: "Well, hang on a sec. I hear that you're graduating from university now with a debt of, on average, \$25,000." They're saying: "That frightens me. That notion frightens me, of graduating from university and not getting a job and, furthermore, having a debt of \$25,000." It seems to me that in this great province of ours we can do better, to ensure that our young people can find that they can afford university, that it's accessible to them, and that they've got a province that's partnering with them by making the appropriate investments in post-secondary education.

What about Mike Harris's broken property tax promise? That has threatened thousands of small businesses. The Common Sense Revolution promised that Mike Harris wouldn't raise property taxes, but then he unleashed a new scheme on the province that had a real, devastating impact here in Toronto. Thousands of small business people had to take to the streets to plead with the Taxcutter to not raise their taxes: their business taxes, their property taxes. We're talking about doubling, tripling and quadrupling their taxes. This would put these people out of business.

Ironically, the hardest hit weren't the people in the downtown bank towers. It was the equivalent of those businesses located on main streets throughout Ontario: small mom-and-pop operations with three, four, five or maybe six employees; people who had invested all of their lives and their energy into building up a business. Suddenly we've got a government that is supposed to be pro-business, a government that is supposed to cut taxes, a government that is supposed to understand and identify with the special challenges before a small business in Ontario, and what does this friendly government do? This friendly government says, "Your property taxes are going up by 300%, 400% and 500%, and I don't care about the consequences."

They're given a bit of a reprieve right now by the government. There's going to be a cap on them. But what after three years? How much comfort does that cap lend our small businesses in Ontario? They've got a cap for three years and no promises beyond that. Owners of those small businesses understand what we in my party understand: It's just a ploy to delay the problem until after the next election. That's all it is.

The other thing that has happened during the past four months is that Mike Harris's war on the poor has continued. I think that's a very appropriate and apt expression of what's going on. This government is waging a war on our most vulnerable, especially on our poor. Perhaps we never

understood that any better than when the Premier said he was going to stop funding that special food supplement for expectant mothers who find themselves on welfare because he thought they were going to put it into beer. Our Premier, of this, the greatest province in the most blessed country on the planet, actually said that you can't trust mothers to do the right thing for their kids. That's what he's saying.

I have talked about it — if I've talked about it once, I've talked about it a hundred times: You spend a dollar up front, you save \$7 down the line, when it comes to making sure kids get a good start in life. Low-birthweight babies — and it just happens that in this great province of ours, that Mike Harris tells us is on the verge of an economic boom, the number of premature babies is skyrocketing. You'd think this was a Third World country. Kids who are being born prematurely because they haven't had the proper nourishment are on the increase in Ontario.

Do you know what it costs to treat a premature baby? At least \$100,000, in most cases, at least \$100,000 when it comes to their medical costs. Kids who are born prematurely also tend to have lifelong problems, in particular lifelong learning problems. So they end up dropping out of school, they end up having difficulty keeping a job, they end up on social assistance, and in many cases, unfortunately, they end up having trouble with the law. You spend a dollar up front, you save \$7 down the line. You spend \$37 every month to help expectant mothers who find themselves on welfare eat properly, you're saving a lot of money down the road.

Perhaps something else that we should understand, what this tells us is that Mike Harris somehow thinks that the poor are different from the rest of us. What he doesn't get is that but for fate, we would be the poor and they would be us; but for fate, we would be the disabled and they would be us; but for fate, we would be the sick and they would be us; we would be the homeless and they would be us, and so on and so on. The people of this province didn't elect the Premier just for the healthy and wealthy. He was elected as a Premier for all Ontarians.

What I'm asking the people of Ontario to do now is to understand what happened at the time of the delivery of the throne speech. We had some very skilled writers, wordsmiths, who sat down and worked long and hard to select the right words and then put them in the right sequence to create the impression that this government is genuinely intent on listening, that this government genuinely cares and that this government can be trusted.

My words of advice to the people of this province are, take a look at this guy's record. This leopard cannot change his spots. We know where he's been and we know what he's done. Take a look at what he's done to health care. Take a look at what he's done to education. Take a look at how he has made it harder for kids in Ontario to get the kind of start they need in life to find success. That's all they've got to do. The record is there and it speaks for itself.

Something else about this Premier that we have right now: You notice, he's the kind of guy who divides. He attacks; he pits one group against another. I've had the opportunity to travel this province on an ongoing basis since becoming leader, and everywhere I go I learn about one hospital fighting against another hospital, I learn about one school board fighting against another school board, I learn about one community fighting against another community.

I was up north and I heard about the public health officer who's fighting with the representatives of the local municipality, saying, "I need to have enough money to implement these programs." The locally elected officials were saying on the other hand: "But that's not what we were sent here for. Those weren't election issues." That kind of a debate, that kind of conflict has been set up by this Premier and he derives his strength from the fact that so many of us seem to be fighting with one another. I think it's important for all of us to understand that if we are going to put this guy out of office, we're going to have to pull together.

I think people now understand. Mike Harris is going to put on a new mask and it's one of those that has a kind of a permanent smile. People can see beyond that mask and they know that when he ran, remember, he didn't say at the time of the election, "I'm running to become your Premier because I care about your health care." He didn't say that. He didn't say, "I'm running to become your Premier because I really care about education for our kids." He didn't say, "I'm running to become your Premier because I really, really care about the disabled, about the elderly, about our sick, about our poor, about our young." He didn't say that. What he said was, "I care about the size of government and, come hell or high water, I will cut it down to size, and if people are hurt along the way, well then, so be it."

You see, for this guy there's just one bottom line. That's just the numbers; that's just the dollars. I want the people of the province to understand that there is an alternative. It's the Liberal alternative. We believe that government has a responsibility, not only to look after the dollars but to look after people. We believe that there is more than one bottom line.

We don't just speak in terms of a financial deficit. We talk about the human deficit and we ask ourselves all of the time: How well is our government treating people in the dawn of life, our kids? How well is our government treating people in the dusk of life, our parents? And how well is government treating people in the shadows of life, our sick, our poor and our disabled? We think those are important questions to be asked of government. We think that test ought to be applied to all governments, including this one, and that's the kind of test we would apply to ourselves.

1540

Something else that the government is intent on creating the impression of is that it's listening. This from the guy who has staked his reputation on not listening. He told people from the outset: "You give me the job and no-

body's going to stand in my way. Nobody is going to stand in my way." He doesn't even listen to his own backbenchers, people found within his own caucus. We heard criticisms once again today and yesterday by members of his own caucus, criticizing the Premier, saying that he has hung the Solicitor General out to dry.

This is not an unusual thing, Madam Speaker, and you will know this, for us here during the time of this Mike Harris government, to hear of his own backbenchers who stand up, go outside, speak with the media and criticize the very actions of their own government. He doesn't listen to his own backbenchers. He hasn't listened to the nurses who have been telling us for a long, long time now that health care cuts are hurting patients in Ontario. He hasn't listened to the families of patients.

I am off to London tomorrow and in London — I'm not sure how many people are living in the city of London, but I think 250,000 people have signed a petition there. I don't think there are that many more people living there. I think virtually everybody in the city of London has signed a petition directed to this government. These are individually signed petition cards and that petition is saying: "Mike Harris, your health care cuts are hurting patient care in our community. Our people are getting hurt as a result of what you're doing to health care."

He's not listening to families and he refuses to listen to the thousands of people who work and volunteer to help our kids in Ontario. We had something unprecedented take place here a couple of weeks ago. We have an advertising campaign put together by the United Way and a number of other agencies that are interested in children. It's called the Campaign Against Child Poverty. They've got a very effective campaign under way. It says: "We're getting a tax reduction. He's paying for it. So will we."

We've got people now who understand implicitly that we've got a couple of choices when it comes to kids in Ontario. Get them off to the right start and you end up with somebody you'd like to have living next door to you; or ignore their needs and stand back and watch out when these kids grow up and they feel they've been deprived of hope, they feel they've been deprived of opportunity and they feel the rules have been stacked against them.

The other thing, of course, is that the Premier has refused to listen to parents and teachers when it comes to our educational needs. We've got a new funding formula in place. There was an article in the paper the other day: "The Toronto Board of Education is saying that under the terms of the new funding formula, funding available for textbooks and classroom supplies will be reduced by 31%." This is the Mike Harris Ontario. People should understand what we're getting into here. We are simply not going to be able to deliver the kind of education our kids need in order to find opportunity.

Then, of course, there were the megacity opponents. Tens of thousands of people came out and said to Mike Harris, the guy who apparently listens: "Don't proceed with your plans. We want to be involved in lending shape to our communities. Give us an opportunity." Isn't it ironic, now that Mike Harris has gone into coast mode,

he's taken his foot off the accelerator, he's saying: "Now I'll listen. I've got everything I've wanted done done and now I'll listen. Come and talk to me."

If you can believe it — if you want to talk about irony that's just too delicious — we've got this guy now, Mike Harris, saying he'll introduce a referendum law. This is the guy who staked his reputation on not listening now saying, "What I will do is introduce a law that would allow you to force me to listen."

It's ridiculous. It's just too much for people to accept. It won't work. People remember the Premier's previous treatment of referenda in the province. There were all kinds of referenda connected with the megacity. Tens of thousands of people came forward, marked their ballot and said, "We will have nothing to do with your megacity." You know what the Premier said? He said: "Too bad. I'm going ahead anyway."

We've had municipalities throughout this province that have voted when it came to the issue of having a casino in their community. They clearly indicated, "We will have nothing to do with your casinos." What has the Premier said? "I have a plan to put 44 neighbourhood casinos into place in this province. I need that money and they're going to go in come hell or high water." That's what the Premier said. So we all know that the jig is up when it comes to this Premier trying to create the impression that he really does listen and that somehow passing a referendum law is going to make it all better.

Another key theme of this throne speech was trust. I think all Ontarians today understand that you can't trust this guy when it comes to health care.

He started by saying that he would never close any hospitals. He's closing 32. He said he wouldn't implement any user fees. "No new user fees." That's what the Common Sense Revolution promised. In fact he's now raising \$225 million in new user fees on seniors' medicine.

Then there's this underserved areas issue. We've got a number of communities throughout the province, some larger and some smaller, where there's a shortage of doctors. People there just can't get the kind of health care they need, that we have access to in many of our larger centres. Mike Harris said: "Don't worry. I promise you I'll fix it." You know what he said? With great fanfare he had a media event and he announced that he was going to send \$36 million into those communities to fix that problem. Eighteen months later the cheque is still unsigned. People in those communities haven't received a cent. They're still at risk when it comes to getting quality health care within their own communities.

I can tell you something that we believe as Liberals and that people of this province should understand. We believe that the quality of health care that you have access to shouldn't be a function of where you live. You should have the same kind of high-quality health care regardless of where you live in Ontario. I just think that's a very important principle for us to respect.

Mike Harris said he wouldn't cut one cent from health care. He's cut \$800 million from our hospitals. There are

10,000 fewer nurses available today working in our hospitals.

Last week I flew home from Toronto to Ottawa and I sat beside a nurse who was returning from England. She'd been there on a six-month contract. I said to her: "Why did you go to England? Surely there ought to be lots of work available in this province." Whenever I talk to people around the province they all tell me the same thing. They tell me that if somebody close to you is in the hospital you had better make sure that you can find the time or that somebody else can find the time to be in there to help deliver basic nursing care, because there are too few nurses in our hospitals. Knowing this, I said to her: "I can't understand. Why aren't there any jobs in Ontario?" She said, quite simply: "There are no jobs for us. We've been told we're not needed."

She told me that those friends of hers who are working here are experiencing some severe morale problems. They're under tremendous stress, not only as a result of physically being run off their feet but the stress that comes from knowing that you're not doing as good a job as you could do, from knowing that you're not doing as good a job as you should do. We can't deliver the kind of quality health care in this province today that we all know we should be delivering, because this guy, Mike Harris, is stopping us from doing it.

1550

I want to make this perfectly clear: Unlike Mike Harris, a government led by me will make health care a top priority. For us, health care isn't just a line in the budget. It's not a necessary evil for government. In fact, for us it's one of the very fundamental purposes of government: simply to make sure we look after our sick, so that when human bodies break down and they stop working, or when one of our people suffers injury, we have people in place and we have places in place where we can care for our sick.

This isn't some kind of an abstract concept for me. I took a year off after high school and got a job for one year as an orderly. I worked at a hospital in Ottawa called the National Defence Medical Centre. My job was very simple: It was to provide basic nursing care to First World War and Second World War veterans. My job required that I shave these men, bathe these men, brush their teeth, brush their hair, clip their nails, give them backrubs, change their diapers, treat their bedsores.

That impressed me with a couple of things I will never, ever forget. They're very strong motivators for me when it comes to government. Number one, the importance of maintaining a fundamental respect for human dignity. Secondly, the importance of always retaining both our willingness and our capacity to care for our sick.

What would I do? That's a fair question. I'll tell you what I would do if I was in charge right now. Number one, we'd stop the hospital cuts. This guy has cut too far, he's cut too deep, and it's hurting patients. You know what? On top of all that he still has left another \$500 million in projected cuts dangling over our heads. He hasn't had the good sense to come forward and say, "Not only have I cut

too deep, but I'm going to stop that further plan to cut even more."

The other thing we would do is we would make patients a greater priority; we would make them the priority when it comes to delivering health care in our province. It seems to me this is a government that has become overly concerned with systems and structures and reform and other such language, which makes me conclude they've lost sight of the single most important person in our health care system. Those are our patients.

The third thing I would do is I would hire more nurses. That woman I met on the plane shouldn't be flying back to England next week. We need her here. We paid for her to become a nurse. We've made that investment in her. She wants to work here, in the province where she was born and raised, with her family. This government is saying to her: "You and 9,000 others, get lost. Leave us alone. We're doing enough when it comes to health care." I can tell you, patients and their families know better.

The fourth thing I would do is I would immediately shut down Mike Harris's hospital closing commission.

Number five: I would stop the hospital closures. No hospital should be closing unless we can provide better health care by some other means. This isn't a fund-raising exercise. The purpose of our health care system is to ensure we can deliver top quality health care to all Ontarians.

Number six: We would stop the move towards a two-tier, American-style health care system. I had my first small taste of American-style health care when I visited Florida recently with my family. I brought down my four children, of course, together with my wife. It was our first time visiting the States as a family. My daughter, who is 16 years of age, was running around a pool and she got what I thought was a small sliver in her foot.

I thought it was not a big deal, but her foot began to swell up quite badly. She was experiencing a lot of pain so we thought we'd better go see a doctor. I had been told ahead of time by our insurer: "This is what you do if you run into any problems. You provide the physician, the American doctor, with a form. The doctor fills out the form and sends it to us, and that's how it works." I thought great. So I go visit the doctor, together with my daughter and my wife. My daughter's in obvious pain and we meet with the doctor. I explained the procedure to the doctor and I'll never forget what he said. He said: "These are the United States of America. You want me to treat your daughter, I'll take your travellers' cheques, I'll take your American cash or I'll take your credit card."

Those are the United States of America. This is Ontario. By cutting away at our system, hacking away at our system, what we are doing bit by bit is driving some people away from our system because if they believe they can't get top quality health care here, they will go elsewhere and so it begins. That's what happens.

When I'm talking about the development of two-tier, American-style health care in Ontario, I think there's real reason for concern when it comes to that development. Not only is quality, fully accessible health care the hallmark of

a caring and compassionate society, I think what the Premier still doesn't understand as well is that it also happens to be one of our competitive advantages. The states that we happen to compare ourselves with on an ongoing basis, when we do that, business people in those other jurisdictions will tell us that one of the things we've got going for us is that it's a heck of a lot cheaper here, less expensive for an employer to have our health care system in place than it is to have the private system in place in the United States of America.

Another issue of trust — gambling. Let's spend a minute here talking about this. Mike Harris told us to trust him on the issue of gambling, and in fact one of the things that he said — just to quote him so we get the record straight — back on May 17, 1993 was: "There is no doubt that communities in Ontario will...change if a casino comes to town. It brings crime, it brings prostitution. It brings a lot of things that maybe an area didn't have before." That's a big crisis. That's what Mike Harris said before he became Premier.

During the campaign he said, "I don't want the money." He wouldn't take the money from gambling. Now what he's saying is, "I want 44 of our neighbourhoods in Ontario to take a casino." He's offering bribes and he's changing the package a little bit, tinkering here and tinkering there, but what he's saying in effect is, "I want 44 neighbourhood casinos set up throughout this province." That's what he's saying. What he's saying is: "I want \$1.1 billion. I want to suck it out of Ontario communities and bring it into the provincial coffers." He's dangling charities before us and saying, "Listen, this will benefit the charities." But we know that for every \$2 he's prepared to give to charities, he's going to take \$8 or \$9 for provincial revenues.

What we're talking about here is a Premier who has developed a serious addiction to gambling revenues. What he's doing is, he wants to institutionalize now a system whereby Ontarians in those 44 communities would go in and lose money on an ongoing basis. He needs people to go into our casinos and to lose their money. Just ask yourself for a minute, quite apart from the social problems that are caused by gambling, what kind of economic sense does it make for \$1.1 billion to be sucked out of local communities and sent here to the provincial coffers? Wouldn't that money be better spent, wouldn't it be wiser to spend it on clothes for your kids, on rent, maybe buying a washer or a fridge or a stove in a local community, maybe putting a downpayment on a car from the local car dealer? Isn't that a better use of local dollars, to invest in local communities?

1600

There's another issue I want to touch on here when it comes to trust and that's the disabled community, one of the groups that was the most upset with the throne speech because it made no reference to them and their needs, and a campaign promise was our disabled community.

While in opposition Mike Harris made several promises to the disabled community. He promised in his Common Sense Revolution that aid to seniors and the disabled

would not be cut. I can tell you, I have heard one sad story after another about people, especially on the special services at home program. These are by and large parents, and in many cases we're talking about parents in their 60s and 70s who have taken it upon themselves to keep their disabled children at home and to provide for their care. All they've asked for from the province is a little bit of help along the way. They're looking for maybe 15 or 20 hours' respite care, just a bit of a break. I can recall one gentleman 71 years of age with a 38-year-old son who was disabled. All he wanted was 20 hours a week reprieve. That's all he asked for. Do you know what the government did? They cut his 20 hours to 10 hours.

So when people out there like this notion of a tax cut in the abstract, let's understand what our parents told us. There's no free lunch. It's going to have to come from somewhere else and it's coming from the disabled community, together with many other communities.

Do you know what else Mike Harris said when it comes to the disabled community? He promised he was going to put into place an Ontarians with disabilities act. I've got the letter he signed. He specifically made that campaign promise. He repeated it more than once and he put it in writing. Now that he's in government and he has the power to honour that promise, he's breaking it, he's not living up to it.

Mike Harris likes to say he's made the tough decisions: "Nobody else was prepared to make these decisions, so I'm going to make the tough decisions." The problem is they weren't the tough decisions, they were the wrong decisions.

Taking on and smearing women who find themselves on welfare and who are pregnant isn't tough, it's mean. Playing hardball with the Dionne sisters, stepping up and saying, "It's my way or the highway," wasn't a tough decision, it was mean.

This implementation of property tax reform that has driven small business owners into the streets wasn't tough, it was incompetent. Closing hospitals with nothing to replace them, that's not a tough decision, that's a dangerous decision. Cancelling junior kindergarten, that's not tough, that's short-sighted. Cutting funding to our colleges and universities, again that's not tough, that's short-sighted.

Do you ever notice that too often with this government toughness gets in the way of doing the right things?

Do you know what? I think it's time to look towards the future. This government has put on its campaign face. I think it's important for all Ontarians to recognize that because we sure as heck do over here. They're running now and they're trying to convince us all is well in Camelot. You know what? We're going to put forward some alternatives. I've spent some considerable time talking about one in particular and I want to take a few minutes to talk about it now, because you can't talk about the future and not talk about our priorities.

Our priorities are very simple: health care, education and making sure our kids get a good start in life.

Some people, and I suspect this government, will go into the next election saying, "We want to buy you again with another tax cut," and some people have said to me, "What about another tax cut?" My response is, "Health care, education and making sure kids get a good start in life."

Others are saying: "Shouldn't the debt come first, the debt that was accumulated over previous generations? Shouldn't that be paid off as quickly as possible by this generation? Don't we have the responsibility to make the debt our number one priority?" I want to make it clear again: My priorities are health care, education and making sure kids get a good start in life.

I have also said that we will not raise taxes. I have also said that we will not take a balanced budget out of balance. We believe you can and must be both fiscally responsible and compassionate, and we intend to do that.

Everybody in this Legislature knows I have made children's issues my first priority, and those aren't just words. Earlier this year I released a children's platform called First Steps. I and my colleague Sandra Pupatello travelled the province and we were joined by many of our other colleagues along the way. We met with over 70 experts and we have released 41 comprehensive recommendations that would have the effect of improving health care, education and the safety of our kids.

From time to time in opposition we are accused of not putting forward any positive alternatives. One third of our priorities have been addressed. We have put forward 41 recommendations when it comes to making sure kids get a better start in life in Ontario. I want the public to understand that.

Here are some of the things we have talked about as important recommendations.

First of all, we think there should be 48-hour hospital care for new moms and their babies. We are finding that today in Ontario, as a result of hospital cuts, cuts made by the Premier to our hospital budgets, mothers and their newborn babies are being evicted at about the 24-hour mark. That is simply too soon. I wrote to the Minister of Community and Social Services, and do you know what she said on that point? She said that experts are telling her that 24 hours is sufficient. You know what I say? I have spoken to young mothers who have delivered babies — I call them the experts — and they tell me that 24 hours is too short a period of time and that they need to have the option of staying on for 48 hours. What we will do in government is ensure that no mother and her newborn baby can be evicted from a hospital in Ontario before the 48-hour mark.

Here's another good idea I've offered to the government, and it doesn't cost a cent. It's called family medical leave. We are finding today that people throughout this province are caught up in a struggle to juggle workplace responsibilities and responsibilities on the home front, whether it means you've got to look after a sick child at home or a dying parent.

We think there should be a law in Ontario, a law that says you shouldn't have to choose between the family you

love and the job you need. That law would say that if you need to take some time to stay at home to care for a sick child or an aging and dying parent, you can do so without fear of losing your job.

There is no obligation on the part of the employer to pay. They have had a law like this on the books in the United States for five years. They have made it work. In that socialist bastion to the south of us, they have made it work. The numbers are in on this. Both employers and employees have reported that this works very well. The thing employers really find and enjoy is the fact that it has instilled in their employees a greater sense of loyalty, because suddenly you have an employer who says: "I understand what you're going through. I understand you need some time now, so you can have the time." It has worked very well there, and I think it could work just as well here. We will reserve it only for our middle-sized and larger corporations because it would just be too hard on our smaller companies. That's something we might address farther down the road, but right now we could put this into place. I'm offering this idea. It's another good idea, up to the government of the day, for them to implement. If they don't, we will.

1610

Junior kindergarten: I'm not sure how much more time I'm going to have to spend talking about this one. As I said earlier, even business gets this one. Business is at the forefront now. Business is saying: "Please, give us junior kindergarten, Ontario. We need it." Do you know what they do in the throne speech? They promise another study. You want a study? I did a study. It's called First Steps. There are 41 recommendations in there. One of those recommendations is you've got to fund junior kindergarten, Ontario, and you're going to have to fund it at a level that's reasonable. Right now, the government's funding it at the level of 25 students per classroom. Anybody who knows anything about four-year-olds knows that you can't take 25 of them and put them together in one classroom and expect to be able to devote any individual attention to them. It just doesn't make any sense. We would fund junior kindergarten and we would do it at a reasonable level.

Here's another good idea: education. Let's understand what we're talking about here when it comes to education. We're investing in our people. We could give a young person a lot of money. We might give them some fancy car or we could provide them with quality education. Only the last one is 100% affordable and entirely theft-proof. Only the last one will provide them with what they need to find success in this new economy.

Here are a couple of facts: Our high-tech industries in this province over the course of the next five years are going to create 56,000 jobs. That's good news. The problem is that our universities right now are only equipped to produce during that same time frame 14,000 graduates. That means we're going to have a shortfall of 42,000 jobs that will be unfilled. Every time we create one of those new jobs we create three or four spinoffs for people who know nothing about high-tech. In other words, education is

the industrial strategy for this knowledge-based economy. Those with the most brain power win. Those with enough foresight to invest in their people win. There are too many people being left behind now. This is a very simple proposal.

Do you know what the private sector has offered now? They've come up with a proposal. They've made it through the Canadian Advanced Technology Association. They're saying if the government puts up \$50 million to expand these programs over the next five years they will put up \$270 million. I mean, that's win-win. We put up a dollar, they put up five. That's a good deal, and Mike Harris ought to have the foresight to understand that this is a winner. It's a winner for the students, it's a winner for the universities, it's a winner for the private sector and it's a winner for all those other people who would find jobs as a result of these jobs being created in the first place. There's another idea for the government to consider.

Je veux prendre un instant pour dire un couple de mots en français. J'ai eu la chance, pendant la fin de semaine, de visiter un de mes collègues, M. Jean-Marc Lalonde, le député de Prescott et Russell, là où habitent plusieurs de nos amis francophones, et j'ai eu la chance de jaser un peu avec eux, de faire un petit discours, et de mieux connaître ce qui se passe dans cette région de notre province.

Je peux vous dire, Monsieur le Président, que dans cette circonscription dans l'est de notre province, comme dans toutes les autres circonscriptions partout dans la province, ils sont inquiétés par ce que fait M. Harris à nos soins de santé, avec ce qu'il fait au niveau de l'éducation, et ils reconnaissent très bien ce que M. Harris fait en causant des dommages à nos enfants qui ont besoin d'avoir les services, la nourriture et l'amour nécessaires pour mieux grandir et devenir des adultes qui respectent la loi, qui sont capables de trouver un emploi et qui sont capables d'agir comme adultes responsables dans notre province.

The Premier's backroom boys and spin doctors want us to believe that Mike Harris has made Ontario the best jurisdiction to live in, work and raise a family. That's what he says. That's the phrase now. They're going to use it all the time. We should probably get ready to hear it over and over again. The truth of the matter is that Ontario was the best jurisdiction before Mike Harris got here and, hopefully to God, it will remain so after he has long departed from the scene.

What this guy forgets is, do you know what makes us the greatest jurisdiction in the world, the greatest province? It's our hospitals, it's our schools, it's our neighbourhoods and it's the sense of compassion that we feel for each other. It's the fact that until recently we have had leaders in this province who felt that their overall responsibility was to pull us together, to look for solutions by working with people, not by dividing us, not by pitting us against each other.

One of the things I learned at home, growing up in a family of 10 kids, was that you accomplished so much more when you pulled together. It wasn't always easy. It calls for compromise on an ongoing basis. I just happen to

believe that "compromise" is not a dirty word in politics. I believe in learning from people out in the front lines, whether it's our teachers or our doctors or our nurses or our auto workers or anybody else in the province who is out there and wants to help. I think we have a responsibility to work with them, not against them; not to pit them against each other. The fact that we have looked out for each other, the fact that we've always assumed a special responsibility for our sick, our poor, our disabled, our very young and our very old, those are the things that made this province great.

In the future, we will be working very hard leading up to the campaign, and I want to assure the people of this province that we can restore greatness to Ontario, and we will do that by never, ever forgetting who sent us here, by never forgetting what we were sent to do, by never, ever forgetting the sick, the poor, the disabled, our kids and our parents.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Order. The Chair recognizes the member for Ottawa South.

1620

Mr McGuinty: I have a motion to amend the government motion on the throne speech.

I, seconded by Mr Bradley, move an amendment to the government motion on the throne speech by adding the following:

Whereas the Harris government has ignored the needs of patients and compromised patient care by firing 10,000 nurses, cutting hospital budgets by \$800 million annually and threatening to close 32 community hospitals; and

Whereas the Harris government has ignored teachers, parents and students by cutting over \$1 billion from our children's classrooms, forcing the elimination of programs such as junior kindergarten and adult education and continually attacked friends of public education; and

Whereas the Harris government has refused to listen to the voices of children by ignoring the need to reform the child welfare system, by reducing the benefits available to children on welfare and by failing to make children a real priority in Ontario; and

Whereas, despite promises not to open unwelcomed neighbourhood casinos, the Harris government has recklessly moved ahead to create 44 neighbourhood casinos; and

Whereas the Mike Harris government has broken its promise to not cut programs to the disabled and has done nothing to increase the access that disabled people desperately need to go to school and find jobs and to participate in our communities; and

Whereas Mike Harris holds those less fortunate in contempt and continues his personal attack on the poor and most vulnerable in Ontario;

This House profoundly regrets that the Harris government has acted on an agenda which has caused significant hardship for our youngest, our oldest, our sickest and our least fortunate in society.

I so move, Mr Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Mr McGuinty moves, seconded by Mr Bradley, an amendment to the government motion on the throne speech by adding the following —

Interjections: Dispense.

Interjections: No.

The Acting Speaker: Whereas the Harris government has ignored the needs of patients and compromised patient care by firing 10,000 nurses, cutting hospital budgets by \$800 million annually and threatening to close 32 community hospitals; and

Whereas the Harris government has ignored teachers, parents and students by cutting over \$1 billion from our children's classrooms, forcing the elimination of programs such as junior kindergarten and adult education and continually attacked friends of public education; and

Whereas the Harris government has refused to listen to the voices of children by ignoring the need to reform the child welfare system, by reducing the benefits available to children on welfare and by failing to make children a real priority in Ontario; and

Whereas, despite promises not to open unwelcomed neighbourhood casinos, the Harris government has recklessly moved ahead to create 44 neighbourhood casinos; and

Whereas the Mike Harris government has broken its promise to not cut programs to the disabled and has done nothing to increase the access that disabled people desperately need to go to school and find jobs and to participate in our communities; and

Whereas Mike Harris holds those less fortunate in contempt and continues his personal attack on the poor and the most vulnerable in Ontario;

This House profoundly regrets that the Harris government has acted on an agenda which has caused significant hardship for our youngest, our oldest, our sickest and our least fortunate in society.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the wish of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): May I move adjournment of the House until tomorrow?

The Acting Speaker: Is it the wish of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1626.

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Quinte	Rollins, E.J. Douglas (PC)	Wilson Heights	Kwinter, Monte (L)
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Renfrew North / -Nord	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Windsor-Sandwich	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Riverdale	Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Windsor-Walkerville	Duncan, Dwight (L)
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St George-St David	Leach, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Yorkview	Sergio, Mario (L)
		York South / -Sud	Kennedy, Gerard (L)
		Nickel Belt	Vacant

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Second Session, 36th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 29 April 1998

Mercredi 29 avril 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
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Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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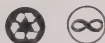
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 29 April 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 29 avril 1998

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): Today in Ottawa-Carleton parents learned the real impact of the Mike Harris revolution. They learned that, thanks to Mike Harris's new funding formula, their children would lose classroom help that just yesterday the government said it would provide. Well, actions speak louder than words.

Because of this government's education funding formula, the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board finds itself some \$37 million short. To make this up, it will lay off over 600 employees. Unfortunately, this will include school psychologists, social workers and speech and language pathologists, who help children with learning disabilities. As a matter of fact, one in four of these school psychologists and speech and language pathologists will be losing their job.

That means we will see, along with the other cuts the school board will be dealing with, some \$16 million cut from special education, from kids who need it most to succeed in school, in the name of the Mike Harris Common Sense Revolution.

And that's not all. Over the next four years, the board will have to cut its programs by over \$87 million, looking at the possibility of school closures.

I just want to make sure that everyone understands the consequences of this Mike Harris revolution. Actions do speak louder than words, and unfortunately, children who have real learning needs will find that these needs will not be met. This will be thanks to a government that's intent on finding funds for an income tax cut.

HATE CRIMES

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): People in Niagara region and indeed across this country are shocked, outraged, disturbed and extremely angry about what has now been two violent desecrations, attacks, on Niagara's Jewish cemetery in St Catharines.

This conduct, these acts, are the most vile and despicable things that could be done in any society anywhere in this world. They're crimes not only against the Criminal Code but against any sense of morality, and the perpetrators of these crimes have no place in our communities or in our society.

The Niagara Regional Police are tenaciously investigating these acts. I tell you that the people of Niagara and other Canadians condemn this conduct.

I appeal to this government to ensure that the Niagara Regional Police have every possible resource put at their disposal during the course of their investigation and that this Attorney General monitor the prosecution of these charges to ensure that the prosecution occurs without compromise, without concession, and that when convictions are obtained the maximum penalty available under law be imposed upon the despicable perpetrators of this inhuman and totally intolerable conduct.

TECHNOLOGICAL TRAINING

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): I recently had the opportunity to meet with business operators in my riding. The message is clear: We need skilled workers from our education system.

This supports the Ministry of Education's new science and technology curriculum and the updating of apprenticeship programs. There are satisfying and high-paying jobs in the trades, and we must make students aware of this.

When visiting Barrie Welding with Minister Tsubouchi, President Brian Smith expressed frustration at the shortage of skilled millwrights, welder-fitters and computer numerical control technicians. In fact, Barrie Welding has three machines sitting idle on some shifts due to the lack of skilled workers.

Mr Smith says children have been graduating from our schools without basic technical knowledge. Colleges have not kept up with employers' demands.

The Industrial Research and Development Institute in Midland is a fine example of the partnerships which need to be established between industry, research and education. The founders of this training centre developed the concept for an educational and technical institute to support Canada's manufacturers. IRDI operates through memberships with manufacturers and in partnership with Georgian College.

We must expand our science, technology and research training to establish our place in the world market and create greater employment opportunities for Ontario's children.

FAMINE IN NORTH KOREA

Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview): Since 1995, it is estimated that over six million people of North Korea's 23 million people have died of starvation. The hardest hit

are the children and the elderly. The German Red Cross estimates that as many as 10,000 children have been dying each month. This number includes 45% of all children under age six. On top of this, 74% of the elderly over the age of 60 have died under horrendous conditions, where they receive such meagre amounts of food that it results in many being almost blind from malnutrition and being unable to walk.

On Monday of this week, a group of prominent Canadians have launched a campaign from Toronto to make people aware of the starvation caused by the widespread famine in North Korea. Led by Dr Joseph Wong, Canadians for North Korean Famine Relief declared April 27 a day of action and thenceforth has determined to collect funds for foods to be sent to those most in need and to make Ontarians aware of this very serious situation. The Canadian federal government has agreed to donate \$4 for every dollar raised by this group for such an important cause.

We in the Ontario Liberal Party applaud Dr Wong and his group for their efforts on behalf of all North Koreans, especially the children and the elderly. We express our sympathy to the people of North Korea. People all over the world have been shocked by the miserable conditions created by this unprecedented tragedy.

COMPENSATION FOR HEPATITIS C PATIENTS

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): Last night we witnessed just how caring and compassionate a Liberal government can be.

In what can only be described as a shameful display, Liberal MP after Liberal MP voted to deny compensation to innocent hepatitis C victims infected before 1986. What should have been a humanitarian debate turned into a loyalty contest directed by a Prime Minister determined to show that he could rally the troops when he needed to. This is from a government that wants to convince people it can be trusted to do the right thing when it comes to the protection of public health.

After the vote Health Minister Allan Rock declared, "This file is closed." This is an insult to tens of thousands of people and their families for whom the file will never be closed. Their suffering will continue.

The issue here should not have been whether some were lucky enough to be infected after a certain date, the issue is whether part of a large group of innocent, suffering people receive help from their own government.

There are many examples where the government has stepped in to help when they didn't have the legal obligation to do so. This winter's ice storm is a recent example. The Dionne sisters is another. We aren't talking about property damage here, though: we're talking about people's health.

My question is: Why would the Liberals work so hard with the Mike Harris government to ensure that innocent hepatitis C victims are denied compensation, are denied the justice and the compassion they deserve?

TECHNOLOGICAL TRAINING

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I rise today in the House to advise the members of the official opening of the new learning resource centre at Sir Sandford Fleming College in Peterborough. This resource centre is a wonderful example of how governments and private enterprise can work together.

The Bell Institute for Learning Design was developed with the assistance of Bell Canada, the Ministry of Education and Training, Human Resources Development Canada and the Friends of Sir Sandford Fleming Foundation, with donations from individuals and corporations.

This facility combines student assessment, support services and a number of educational technologies in one facility. It is a showcase for the demonstration of new and emerging educational technologies such as videoconferencing, audio and audiographic conferencing. College staff, teachers and trainers in the public and private sector can now access curriculum and learning design services as well as the state-of-the-art computing facilities for the development of technology-based materials.

This is a fine example of what the Ministry of Education and Training is doing. By working in partnership with these other organizations and by making a contribution of \$3.5 million to aid in construction costs, we are seeing the initial stages of a strategic planning initiative to be developed under Sir Sandford's master academic framework.

I wish to congratulate all those involved in producing such a fine facility.

HATE CRIMES

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): We've had a very sad event in our community over the past few days. The headline in our local newspaper reads, "Hate in a Cemetery." It describes people who are desecrating gravestones of people who are of the Jewish faith, on an ongoing basis unfortunately. The motivation is clearly that of hate and nothing else.

An arrest has been made in one particular case, but that has not stopped what has happened. Gravestones again, on a second occasion, have been pushed over. Members of the Jewish community in St Catharines are in great anguish over this, as all people should be, not only in our community but across our province and our country and our world.

Let me read from a story in the Standard which says the following:

"Members of the Jewish community in St Catharines will be celebrating Israel's 50th birthday under a dark cloud after 43 headstones in their cemetery were vandalized over the weekend in what police are treating as a hate crime.

"We'll be pursuing this as a hate crime and we'll be asking the crown attorney to seek a higher sentence," said Superintendent K.R. Davidson of Niagara Regional Police.

"This is a hideous attack on the community, not just the Jewish community but the community as a whole."

I think all of us in this House would agree with that sentiment.

1340

SUDBURY NEUTRINO OBSERVATORY

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): Today the Sudbury Neutrino Observatory will be officially opened in our community. In recognition of this historic event, scientists and representatives of industry and governments from Canada, the United States and Great Britain have gathered in Sudbury to participate in the opening ceremonies. We are particularly proud that Dr Stephen Hawking from Cambridge University was able to come to the community to join the celebrations.

The Sudbury Neutrino Observatory is a scientific and engineering achievement. As a scientific project, the observatory will be used to detect neutrinos, which are thought to be basic building blocks of matter. They are produced by nuclear reactions which power the sun, and their detection in the heavy water stored in the observatory will reveal information about the sun and stars which can't be obtained by any other means.

As an engineering feat, the laboratory, which is the size of a 10-storey building, is located at the 6,800-foot level of Creighton Mine. The Plexiglas sphere holding the heavy water is the largest ever built, and there are 9,500 ultrasensitive light sensors in place to observe the faint bursts of light produced by the neutrinos.

The project has been under construction since 1990 and has involved over 70 scientists from 12 institutions in Canada, the US and the UK. The funding came from a consortium of governments, government agencies and industrial supporters in Canada, the US and the UK.

This neutrino observatory is the result of hard work and collaboration by many individuals over a number of years, and it's a credit to them and their dedication that it is officially opening today.

AGRICULTURE DAY

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): It is my pleasure to rise in the Legislature today in recognition of what I believe is one of the most important days of the year. Today is the day in which we celebrate the hard work and dedication of the many people in Ontario who put food on our tables. Today is Agriculture Day, and we have had many representatives from different commodity groups with us, some in the gallery today, to help us recognize that good things grow in Ontario.

Agriculture is the second largest industry in Ontario and it is a major force driving the economy. It is the agriculture sector that provides the fuel that drives the engine of Ontario forward. I am proud to say that the farmers I represent in Perth county are among the best producers in Ontario.

Ontario's agrifood industry is a world leader. The tremendous contribution which this sector makes to the provincial economy, some \$25 billion every year, is a key

factor in positioning Ontario as one of the best places in North America to live, work and raise a family. In the months and years ahead, our agrifood industry will continue to be a key to our success. We must ensure that the agriculture industry continues to look to the future, to remain world leaders in quality and highly competitive in both domestic and global markets.

Mr Speaker, I hope you and the other members of the Legislature will join with me today in celebration of the accomplishments of the agriculture industry in Ontario.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TAXPAYERS SAVINGS MUNICIPAL AMENDMENT ACT (OTTAWA-CARLETON REGION), 1998

LOI DE 1998 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MUNICIPALITÉS AFIN QUE LES CONTRIBUABLES RÉALISENT DES ÉCONOMIES FISCALES (RÉGION D'OTTAWA-CARLETON)

Mr Guzzo moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 9, An Act to amend the Municipal Act to provide Savings to Taxpayers in the Ottawa-Carleton Region /
Projet de loi 9, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les municipalités afin de faire réaliser des économies fiscales aux contribuables de la région d'Ottawa-Carleton.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Any brief comments?

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): The bill provides for a restructuring of the regional municipality of Ottawa-Carleton and its constituent municipalities by agreement of the affected municipalities or by order of a restructuring commission. The bill further provides that the restructuring shall occur on or before November 1, 2000.

MOTIONS

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to move without notice a motion respecting the order of routine proceedings on Thursday, April 30, 1998.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon Mr Sterling: If I could, I would like to thank the opposition parties for their cooperation in this matter. We are seeking to change the order tomorrow so that many members of the Legislature will have the opportunity to be here for question period but be able to attend the funeral

of the spouse of one our members. I am of course referring to Mr Bassett's recent death.

I move that, notwithstanding standing order 30(a), on Thursday, April 30, 1998, the routine proceedings before the orders of the day shall be as follows: oral questions, introduction of bills, statements by the ministry and responses, members' statements, reports by committees, motions, deferred votes, and petitions.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I would be willing to give consent for the remainder of the session for that to be the order, if the government House leader would like it to be the case.

The Speaker: That's something you can have a chit-chat about later, I suppose.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

LONG-TERM CARE

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): I rise today to inform the House of an announcement made this morning by the Premier and myself on the most significant expansion of health services ever made in the history of our province. This announcement of \$1.2 billion in long-term care and community funds will have a very positive and wide-ranging impact on our health system and improve the quality of life for all Ontarians. It will enable us to build a health system that will meet the evolving health needs of Ontarians today and into the future.

For over two and a half years, our government has moved forward with changes to build a better health system for the people of Ontario, one that finally responds to the needs of our changing, growing and aging population, a health system that will provide improved access to high quality services.

Until today's investment, there had not been an announcement regarding new long-term-care beds since 1988.

Today's announcement moves forward and it complements the hospital reforms that are being carried out as recommended by the Health Services Restructuring Commission. Today's investment moves us towards a comprehensive, coordinated health system that provides a continuum of care for people consistent with their needs. Meeting the needs of our seniors means that high-quality long-term care must be available. People over the age of 75 are the largest users of long-term-care services, and Ontario's over-75 population is expected to increase by 35% between 1998 and 2008.

This historic investment today will add 20,000 new beds for nursing homes and homes for the aged over eight years, and it will allow for the renovation of an additional 13,000 more beds in order that they can meet the new

design standards which will contribute to a more home-like environment in our long-term-care facilities.

1350

The investment also means improved access to community-based services for an additional 100,000 Ontarians in the areas of nursing, homemaking, therapy, Meals on Wheels, supportive housing and services for the physically disabled. This investment will also mean the creation of 70,000 new jobs, 27,500 of which are new front-line health jobs, including 7,900 positions for nurses and 11,350 jobs for homemakers and home care aides; and 42,500 of these jobs are construction jobs which will be available on sites throughout Ontario because these 20,000 new beds will result in the establishment of approximately 175 new facilities.

This new funding, this new level of support, will mean that more people are able to leave hospitals and receive care in their own homes. There will be less pressure on families, particularly women, who are the primary caregivers. More children with special needs will be supported at school and in their homes. These measures will also take the pressure off emergency rooms and hospital beds and significantly reduce waiting lists for nursing homes and homes for the aged.

In conclusion, today our government has taken significant steps forward to improve health services for the people of this province. Today is an exciting and important day, as we are ensuring that high-quality health services will be there for Ontarians at every stage of their lives. Today I am proud to say we are investing in people and we are building a health system that is consistent with the needs of people today and those in the 21st century.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): It is indeed unfortunate we don't have the Premier here to stand behind some of the words that he said earlier today about this particular announcement. This is supposed to be Mike Harris's last-minute conversion to health care; instead of cutting and slashing and taking away, as Mike Harris has done year after year, suddenly we're to believe that something is going to change and patients will be better off.

Even if this announcement had been made two and a half years ago when we might have believed that the government then had a plan for health care, we might at that time have conceded that. Instead we have an announcement over eight years. This government proposes to restore over eight long years an amount of money that is less than they have taken out of hospitals over the last two. These guys know how to cut, but when it comes to making patients the focus, being able to actually look after them, this government has an immense amount of trouble.

When the government gets into public relations mode like this, when they import the people to applaud as they did this morning at the announcement, they've got to know that there are patients out there who aren't being fooled, patients who are staring up at the ceilings in emergency room hallways, who are sitting on waiting lists for surgery, who haven't got anything to look forward to from

this government expect less nursing care and less access to their doctors.

This government tries to portray the beds that are being announced today as if they're brand-new; they're not. They're actually taking 3,500 beds out of chronic care hospitals where people get decent care from registered nurses, and what they're going to be offered instead is discount health care. That's what this government stands for. Instead of actually dealing with people in the way that they deserve, we have this late announcement, timed not to provide a single bed by the time of the next election, and the people of Ontario need to hold this government to account. This announcement, if it is to be believed, would amount to about \$150 million a year.

Let's look back at this government's record. In 1996 they announced \$170 million would be going into long-term care and all the back bench got up and applauded. What happened in 1996-97? Not one dollar got put into long-term care. In fact, as an insult to the seniors and the disabled of this province who need this care, \$5 million less was actually spent by this government.

We know that this late, last-minute conversion of Mike Harris to community health care is probably not worth the paper it's printed on today. But if we look at what this government is talking about in terms of what it wants to do for people, let's just look at what the government says it might do for —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order, order. Just a minute. Government members, I think they allowed the minister to make the statement in relative calm. I would ask the government members to come to order and allow the response to be made in the same relative calm.

Mr Kennedy: I can understand why they're agitated. They've got to take this weak, watered-down package, which obviously lost out to everything else that must have come to caucus, bring it back to their communities and try and tell the seniors currently in chronic care beds why they're going to be ripped out of them and put into inferior facilities, try and tell people why this government, this Premier and this minister, didn't have the gumption, the courage to stand up and say: "Here are the standards we're going to provide. We're going to make sure that you can get the same care you're getting today when we put you in those facilities." The people being moved into these —

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): You sit down.

The Speaker: Etobicoke-Humber, come to order.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): He's out of control, Mr Speaker. He's out of control over there.

Mr Kennedy: Again, I understand the disappointment being expressed by the members opposite today in this announcement. It's well founded because there isn't proper protection for people today, not in the nursing homes, not in home care. We're going to have many more sick people, people who are leaving hospitals sicker and quicker. They're not going to be protected. You're not providing them with a standard of care.

What you are doing is opening up an immense bias for for-profit Americanized health care. You're making the nursing homes and the non-profit facilities pay for their facilities. You're opening up that bias. We've already seen that happen in terms of your taking the whole home care sector, the health care that people used to be able to get from nurses, and making it happen in the for-profit sector. You're making the standards go down, the nurses are being paid less and they're leaving the sector. That's what you're doing: 100% of home care is being privatized by your government this summer, and this just sets that up.

The disappointment that must be felt by sick patients today — you had a chance to stand up for sick people in Ontario. Minister, you blew it.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I would say to the minister that pride goes before a fall. The kind of pride and hubris that have been expressed today by you and by the Premier around this announcement are going to be found out by people as they see what really happened.

People in Ontario are not as foolish as your government seems to think they are. People in Ontario know that the reason the need out there in the community has grown so great for the dollars you are announcing over eight years is that in the last three years you've shut down so many possibilities for them to get care in the hospitals under the Canada Health Act, where they're entitled, no matter what money they have, to a quality standard of care.

You, by your budget cuts to hospitals, have forced people out of those standardized, protected places into their communities, where you have not provided the care they needed and, as my colleague in the Liberal Party pointed out, announced money and then actually flowed less.

Those of us in this Legislature who get a chance to look at the estimates and then at the end of the year, about 18 months later, actually, look at public accounts, know the smoke and mirrors that your government is using to try and convince the people of Ontario that you're providing services to them.

This announcement makes history only because, I don't think, ever in history before have we seen a government with the nerve to make this kind of fanfare over an announcement that has absolutely no timetable whereby the money is actually going to be flowed, has no mention of the standards under which the money is going to be flowed, has absolutely no commitment to meet the immediate needs that have been identified in absolutely every community, to a community out there that has seen you stop the dollars from flowing that had been previously announced.

1400

You say there was no improvement in long-term care. You know very well, as does your government, that there was a plan in place to revitalize long-term care across the province. You say we didn't open any beds, but in Windsor we had a wonderful facility that we funded and opened that combined chronic care and long-term care in a new mode of care that you now have taken dollars out of.

Quite frankly, Minister, you are trying to fool the people of Ontario that there's salvation coming some time in the future when in fact they're experiencing purgatory, if not hell, in the overcrowded corridors of our hospitals.

What is more, what you are doing is moving people from the publicly funded, publicly accountable health care service into the privatized area — privatized within the home, privatized within the community — in a way in which we know you will encourage large corporations to take on that care. We've all observed what you did with the CCACs — putting things out to tender, basing it on a market basis — which means that our public health care dollars, my tax dollars, are going to end up in the pockets of big corporate managers, big corporate companies, not put into the care of my community. I resent that and I think the people of Ontario will resent that as they watch you encouraging that privatization.

Minister, if you're going to do this and if you expect to get any credit for this announcement today, we are going to hold you to opening up about the actual timetable on which these dollars are going to be presented. We are going to require you to be much more accountable than this government has been about its announcements, which never see dollars flowing into the community.

We are going to be watching very carefully the efforts you make to ensure that standards of care are ensuring the continuum of care that you say you're guaranteeing to people out there in the community, because that is not what is happening under your market picture of long-term care out there under the CCAC. We are seeing that care being driven down every day.

Your credibility, Minister, is going to depend on your announcing in a very clear way exactly when and exactly how this government is going to make health care better in Ontario.

ANNUAL REPORT, ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER OF ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table the 1997 annual report of the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario.

ORAL QUESTIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I have a question for the Minister of Health. Minister, I want to ask you about your announcement today in terms of its impact on people.

You participated with some fanfare today, saying that there would be thousands of new beds, saying that this was a big milestone, an improvement. What you didn't say is that you're putting money ahead of patients.

Today you pay approximately \$234 or \$250 per day for very sick and ill patients in chronic care facilities. In this brave new world of yours, you'll pay \$60 a day for patients in long-term care facilities.

Minister, why are you taking away the protections that those patients in chronic care facilities have today under the Canada Health Act and under the Public Hospitals Act? Why are you replacing 3,500 chronic care beds and the sick people who are in them? Why are you transferring them to facilities which won't provide them with those standards and a good quality of care?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): As you know, the hospital association has indicated that many of the individuals who are presently being accommodated within the chronic care hospitals could appropriately be accommodated within the long-term-care sector, because what we see today in the long-term-care facilities is individuals who are older and frailer than ever before.

What our government has committed to do to ensure that the nursing and the personal care services are going to be provided is that each year there is an assessment made of individuals in the long-term-care facilities and the appropriate level of funding is provided. All people in those facilities will be funded according to the level of care that is consistent for their needs.

Mr Kennedy: Minister, in a chronic care hospital today there is a team approach that provides for that patient. There are physiotherapists, occupational therapists, registered nurses who are making sure that when a person has a degenerative disease — they start to lose function, like Gladys Conroy at Runnymede Hospital, whom you want to remove from Runnymede Hospital. When she is getting the care that she's getting there today for her Alzheimer's and advanced dementia, she is treated like a person, she is treated like an individual with the highest quality of life possible. It is nothing against long-term-care facilities to say that for the fewer dollars that you're going to give them, they're not going to be able to provide that same level of care to Gladys or to hundreds of others.

You've done it in Thunder Bay, where people had to leave chronic care facilities already. You've done it in other parts of the province. Minister, will you rethink this? Will you come up with a blended formula? I ask you very specifically, will Gladys Conroy and the other people in chronic care beds be guaranteed the same or better level of care in the future? Will you do that?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I think it's very important to recognize that our government has very carefully taken a look at the emerging needs of seniors in this province and we have made every effort to ensure that the needs of those individuals are going to be addressed, that the appropriate level of nursing and personal care will continue to be provided. As I have just said, an annual assessment is made and then the appropriate level of funding and the appropriate level of care is provided to each and every individual in this province.

Mr Kennedy: Minister, if you can't say to Gladys Conroy that she's going to get the same level of care, then

all the rest of those words don't mean anything. If you can't tell Mrs Carley Sala, her daughter, who is worried — she is saying she can't understand why you're evicting her mother from her home at Runnymede Hospital, why you're doing that in pursuit of an area that we really haven't developed standards for.

You say it'll be assessed. By whose standards? Minister, it's no longer under the Public Hospitals Act, it's no longer under the Canada Health Act when a patient leaves those hospitals. Will you be adopting standards? Will you put these patients under the Canada Health Act? Will you make sure that Gladys and the other people in those 3,500 beds you are erasing get exactly the same care today and in the future that they have been getting?

Hon Mrs Witmer: We have made a commitment and that's why we made the announcement today. We have recognized that there are people throughout this province who are not receiving the level of care, the accessibility to the care that is needed. That is why today we have indicated that over the next eight years we will be building and adding to the system 20,000 new beds. Not only will we be adding 20,000 new beds, but we are going to be renovating 13,000 additional beds in older facilities in order that they can meet the present standards. In fact, we have new design standards that are intended to ensure that people living in long-term-care facilities not only get the level of care needed, not only get the level of funding, but are also provided for in a more home-like setting.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Today the Ontario child advocate released a very remarkable report that documents the voices of children in Ontario's care. What is so remarkable about the report is that there is nothing new in it. Everything that was released today itemizes the leaks in your system that you have not yet addressed and you've been at it for three years. Minister, after this most damaging report, released this morning, I would like your accounting of what you are doing for the children in your care here in Ontario.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): We were quite pleased to receive the advocate's report. As she notes in her introductory comments, for a decade kids in care have been telling adults about these same experiences, and the honourable member is quite right that these problems have existed for many years in the system.

What we are doing through our reform initiatives in the justice area, what my colleague Mr Runciman has been doing through strict discipline facilities, what we've been doing through child welfare reforms, what we've been doing with our reform initiative called Making Services Work for People, which is shifting resources to more intervention and prevention programs, all of those reforms, which are ongoing, are designed to address specifically the kinds of problems the advocate has flagged.

1410

Mrs Pupatello: I would like you to review all the documents on my desk now. These are all reports that have a very common theme, and the common theme in all these reports dictates that there is a leak in your system that you have not addressed, and you've been at it for three years. In those three years you have not caused reform, you have not reallocated. You've cut \$17 million from the operating budgets of children's aid, you've cut \$14 million from services that deal with children, \$8 million from children's mental health agencies right across the province. That is not reallocation, that is letting those children slip right through the cracks.

We address that in the policy we forwarded to you. It's called First Steps. We are asking you to implement these steps so we can have a seamless system. We haven't had your official response to First Steps. We want you to implement it now, not wait until we get the opportunity to do so.

Hon Mrs Ecker: With all due respect, I realize that the communication between her office and the leader's office may not be very good, but I did respond to First Steps. I sent a letter to the Leader of the Opposition outlining many of the initiatives he recommended that we indeed agree with and are proceeding with.

I would also like to point out to the honourable member that the advocate, who made many strong recommendations for change, which we are examining, and we are acting on many, also spoke of the success stories she heard when she talked to people. The children she talked to spoke of special places where special people help to mould their identity in positive and healthy ways. There were many youth in environments that were conducive to healing, in her words. She talks about the care system becoming too rigid and institutionalized, which is one of the reasons our Making Services Work for People framework, using community agencies with the expertise, is bringing forward those recommendations so children don't fall through the cracks.

Mrs Pupatello: Minister, you don't even pay your bills. The children's aid societies are in debt. You are not paying their contingency funding. You have cut services that already exist, with lineups of children waiting for intervention. That is what your record is for children in Ontario. The child advocate this morning released information that tells you that while you might call for more studies, when you say "studies" you mean stall, because what children need today is action from your government. We are asking you for action, not for letters back on our policy, but implementing what we are asking you to do. Will you do that, Minister?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I can understand why, after over 10 years of the problems existing in the system, the honourable member may have some difficulty recognizing the steps we are taking, but let me talk to you about some of those steps.

The reform in child welfare, to change the legislation, to improve the training for front-line workers, to put more money into the system — dollars that are actually out

there hiring more people. We're spending more money on the child welfare system than any government has spent before: the Better Beginnings, Better Futures program that is supporting 5,000 high-risk families in this province; the Healthy Babies program that is supporting 9,000 mothers with home visits, high-risk families, to get the support they need; the \$20 million for speech and language that is virtually doubling the number of preschoolers who will receive speech and language support; the 39,000 more children who got child nutrition programs. There are many reforms. We know that we need to do more. That's why I welcome the recommendations from the child advocate.

DISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): My question is to the Attorney General. Bob Runciman did the right thing a couple of days ago when he resigned and accepted his part of the responsibility for the apparent breach of our criminal laws in Thursday's throne speech. Even your own backbenchers are now publicly recognizing that Mr Runciman did not act alone in this apparent breach. It took you five days to discharge your responsibilities as Attorney General of this province and call for the RCMP to carry on an investigation.

What I want to ask you about is what happened during that intervening period of time, particularly with respect to evidence that might be necessary in this investigation, both in the office of the Solicitor General and particularly in the Premier's office. What assurances can you give us that steps were taken to secure potential evidence, particularly in the Premier's office, during those five days that have intervened since the throne speech?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): As I indicated yesterday, the matter has been referred to the RCMP as a result of the allegations that have been made. They are going to perform an investigation and proceed appropriately, and I have no comments to make.

Mr Silipo: Attorney General, it took you five days to carry out your responsibilities and to ask for that investigation. You hid for five days and your Premier hid for five days behind that apparent investigation, which hasn't yet started, and you have not in the meantime given us any assurances that any potential evidence that the investigation would have to look at has not been altered during that time. So I want to ask you again, how can we believe and how do you expect the people to believe that nothing has happened, in the Premier's office particularly, to change or tamper with any evidence that the RCMP might need in their investigation?

Hon Mr Harnick: All of these issues are subject to the investigation that the RCMP will be performing. The Premier has indicated very quickly and very straightforwardly that there will be full cooperation, and it would be inappropriate to make any further comments in light of the police investigation.

Mr Silipo: Let me remind the Attorney General of something that Mr Runciman said back in 1992: "...a chief adviser to himself coming into the office only a few hours before an official police investigation is launched, in the dead of night on a Sunday night, to remove files.... I like to think that if my executive assistant, for example, was accused of criminal activity, I would secure my office. I wouldn't allow my executive assistant to go in and rifle the files a few hours before the police launch their official investigation."

I ask you again, what individuals were allowed continued access to the Office of the Premier, the office of the Solicitor General, and why was there not security placed on those offices in order to protect evidence that the RCMP might need in their investigation?

Hon Mr Harnick: Again, I can't comment about the parallels to different situations that the member puts, but certainly the RCMP have been notified. There is an investigation ongoing, and any comment would be inappropriate.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question, third party.

Mr Silipo: Speaker, I want to go back to the Attorney General and I want to ask him about this investigation and what he did and didn't do, because as I said before, it took him five days to discharge his responsibilities, the responsibilities that he knows he has as the Attorney General, aside from being a member of cabinet, as the chief law officer of the province. It took him five days to make the request, to follow the protocol that we understand is there in the ministry, and quite frankly, we still don't know what the scope of that is, even after those five days. Will you tell us now what the scope of the investigation is that you have requested? Have you made sure, for example, in your request to the RCMP that they will have complete access to whatever offices they wish, whatever people they wish and be able to carry out their responsibilities to the fullest?

1420

Hon Mr Harnick: Certainly we've indicated before that full cooperation will be given. This is an issue that has been in the hands of the assistant deputy minister responsible for criminal law since last Thursday. It is an issue that is being dealt with according to a protocol as is appropriate.

Mr Silipo: Yesterday my leader asked the Attorney General if, among other things, he would release a copy of the protocol that exists in the Ministry of the Attorney General. I want to ask the minister again whether he will release that information and whether he will also release to us that letter — because we understand that the correspondence between the ADM and the RCMP cannot be released unless, of course, the minister wants it to be released — so we can see ourselves what the nature of the request for the investigation contains. Will the minister agree to release those two pieces of information to the House?

Hon Mr Harnick: I have tried to explain to the member that this is a matter that is under the control

completely of the assistant deputy minister for criminal law. It is not a matter that I am involved with; it is not a matter that I in any way have any connection to or direction over. It is appropriate to be in the hands of the assistant deputy minister for criminal law, as the protocol states, and that's what is being done.

Mr Silipo: I would have thought that a simple "Yes" to my request for the protocol then would have been okay. What does the minister have to worry about in not wanting to release the protocol?

Again I say to the Attorney General particularly that maybe he doesn't fully appreciate that what we have here is a serious apparent breach of the criminal laws of the country. This isn't a minor offence. The people who are under investigation include ministers in this government, include people in the Office of the Premier, and there are a lot of questions that need to be answered. We want to be sure that given particularly that it has taken five days for the Attorney General to discharge his responsibilities and that he did that only after our leader requested that he do that and made the request for an investigation directly to the RCMP — we want to make sure that he now carries on his responsibilities. Again I ask the minister, will he release the protocol and will he release the letter that went from his ministry to the RCMP?

Hon Mr Harnick: Again I will say to the member that this is not a matter that I have any connection to or direction of. It is fully and firmly within the jurisdiction of the assistant deputy minister, as is appropriate, and that is the proper way to deal with this issue.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Today the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario issued a report for 1997. It is clearly the most damning report on performance of an environment minister in the history of this province. The report is clear: You have failed miserably; you have let down the people of Ontario. Minister, you have not protected the health and environment of Ontarians.

The report shows that you have unenforceable guidelines for air quality and that they're regularly exceeded in places like Windsor, Toronto, Hamilton, Sault Ste Marie and London. By your own admission, 1,800 people a year die in Ontario due to bad air. The report today unveils that by the year 2015, with all the steps you have taken, the air quality in this province will be worse than it is today. That means another 18 years of 1,800 deaths a year as a result of your inaction.

The commissioner stated that air quality information is not being collected, that your ministry does not track industrial discharge into the waterways. Minister, you have failed. Today will you do the best thing for the province of Ontario and the environment and resign, and let someone else who will be able to do the job take over your ministry?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): The Environmental

Commissioner issued her report today. I intend to take it seriously and to look at her recommendations. I think it's most interesting that with regard to her previous recommendations some time ago, last year, we have been able to respond to I think 18 of her 25 recommendations.

We will continue to look at the report. I have, of course, not had the opportunity to look at it in detail, and I will look at her constructive suggestions in that light.

Mr Agostino: Minister, I am sure you have been briefed on this. There is nothing in there that should give you any confidence in your ability to continue as Minister of Environment. It is clear you have failed the people of Ontario miserably.

Let me focus on Plastimet. We've asked for a public inquiry. Today the commissioner has joined that call. The commissioner has asked, as well as the opposition parties, for a public inquiry into Plastimet. She said that your inaction, as a result of not looking closely enough at the need for a certificate when you knew there was no market for plastic recycling in Ontario, may have caused that fire. She said that you have taken no action to address the fire marshal's recommendations that were addressed after the fire.

Minister, you have given us no explanation why you won't call a public inquiry. You have not given us an explanation why a certificate was not issued that could have prevented that fire. You have let the people of Hamilton down. Once again you have shown the incompetence of your ministry and your own performance, the commissioner stated today.

Again, in view of the request of the Environmental Commissioner, will you today call for a public inquiry into the Plastimet fire?

Hon Mr Sterling: As I indicated before, I guess, the question is to look at this particular report. I did have a look at the report with regard to the Plastimet fire situation, and very few of the allegations or statements made by the member opposite are included in the report.

Mr Agostino: Read the report.

Hon Mr Sterling: I have read the report in that regard, and what is purported by the member is in fact not in the report.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question, third party.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): My question is to the Minister of Environment. The Environmental Commissioner today issued a devastating report that said, "Environmental health continues to be a very low priority for the ministers of this province."

Minister, what the commissioner is saying, albeit it rather politely, is that our health is going to get worse and is more at risk if you don't clean up your act and if you don't clean it up now.

Last year you announced the beginning of the Drive Clean program after your Premier said publicly that that was one of the biggest failures of your government. Now we hear that it's going to be delayed for another year.

You yourself admitted that up to 1,800 people a year die as a result of smog. You are committing some of these

people to a death sentence because you are not cleaning up your act, you're not getting this program started, and in fact you're relying on volunteers to clean up the air in general.

Will you reverse that position today and get this program up and running now, and will you bring forward —

The Speaker: Thank you, member for Riverdale. Minister.

Hon Mr Sterling: As members know, we introduced the Drive Clean program, which we are working and negotiating with the private sector to provide at the present time. This program will be the most complex, the largest, most widely used program of any state or province in North America. It is a very, very thorough program where we will get reductions.

I do not apologize for that. It is a very expensive program. It is \$70 million a year, which in effect is increasing the budget of the Ministry of Environment by that amount through an indirect method. I think it's a terrific program and the people of Ontario are right behind it.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

1430

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Minister, I want to return to the fact that the commissioner also raises again the Plastimet fire. For almost a year now everyone who has had anything at all to do with or cares about the Plastimet fire has said to you that you have a moral obligation to call a public inquiry. The commissioner has said that you have not answered adequately the questions that arose. You've stood in your place repeatedly and said, "I'll answer any questions," or "I think I've answered all the questions," or "The answers are there." Well, now we've got the Environmental Commissioner saying that you're not providing adequate answers.

It's not just the residents, it's not just the opposition parties, the firefighters involved, the people in the hospital close by. Twelve communities in addition to Hamilton-Wentworth city council and Hamilton city council have all said there needs to be a public inquiry; and now this.

Minister, this isn't going to go away. When are you going to do the right thing? When are you going to finally call a public inquiry into the Plastimet disaster? We deserve it.

Hon Mr Sterling: To the member from Hamilton, who asks about the Plastimet site, I think a little history is important here. During the period from 1990 to 1995, this site had some 20 fires. The member opposite was the Solicitor General at that time and he didn't call an inquiry into what was happening with regard to that site although he had the power at that particular time to do that.

Mr Christopherson: You are a coward.

Hon Mr Sterling: I have said if the city of Hamilton and the regional municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth would like to call an inquiry, we will cooperate. Let them call it.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Hamilton Centre and member for Riverdale, you must come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: If the government whip wants to stand up on a point of order, you're allowed to. There's no point in heckling me. I can't hear you.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister without Portfolio): Mr Speaker, since when was "coward" parliamentary language?

The Speaker: I didn't hear the member say that. If that's your point of order, then I may ask the member to withdraw it if in fact he said that. Second, I'm not certain "coward" is out of order. If he wants to withdraw it, he can, but I certainly wouldn't rule "coward" out of order.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): My question is to the Minister without Portfolio responsible for privatization, who is also the government lead on auto insurance reform.

Auto insurance reforms introduced by the previous two governments resulted in spiralling costs to consumers and wreaked havoc on consumers' pocketbooks. Under the Liberals' Bill 68, the rate for car insurance began with an increase of almost 7% in just one year. Under the previous NDP government, under Bill 164, consumers saw an increase of some 21% over two years. Motorists were outraged, and rightfully so. This government had to clean up the mess that was created by the previous Liberal and NDP attempts at dealing with the issue of car insurance.

Minister, we appreciate your leadership and the consumers of this province appreciate your leadership on the issue of auto insurance reforms. I would ask the minister to explain to this House and to the people of this province how Bill 59 was able to stabilize insurance rates and what some of the other benefits are to the people of this province.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]): To my colleague from York-Mackenzie, who I know has been following our reforms on auto insurance on behalf of his constituents very closely, he will now know, because he has been following it very closely, that the key premise of our reform was to put Ontario drivers back in the driver's seat as far as auto insurance is concerned. Indeed, they were frustrated and annoyed at year-over-year rate increases that were delivered by the plans of the two previous administrations across the House here.

We have tackled the problem by delivering a plan that we think is fair and reasonable. In fact, since its implementation, it has provided rate reductions of just under 10%, which is a tremendous feat given that most jurisdictions in North America are facing rate increases in this particular product year over year, even today as we speak. For retirees, there are even further discounts as they benefit from mandatory retiree discount reductions that we've put in place.

Clearly, to my colleague the member for York-Mackenzie, in fact the auto insurance plan is working.

Rates are going down, and consumers have a chance to buy indeed only what they want to and have to buy.

Mr Klees: That indeed is great news for Ontario motorists, and I'm sure all members of the House will applaud you for that. I'd like to know, however, what you're doing to continue to manage this. Other governments have addressed the issue and then have left it, and rates continue to spiral. I'd like to know what other benefits are going to be flowing from Bill 59 and what you as minister are doing to continue to ensure that this issue is managed on behalf of the consumers of this province.

Hon Mr Sampson: The member for York-Mackenzie is correct: Good management of this particular issue involves the continued review of the plan to make sure it is keeping its commitment to Ontarians with regard to rate stability. We have instituted a two-year mandatory review plan, and we intend to do that. We intend to speak to the issues being raised by consumers and other stakeholders within the group, who have been working since the implementation of the particular bill to deliver to this government recommendations for reform that they think make sense, recommendations that would continue to add benefits to Ontario consumers, Ontario drivers.

Quite clearly, the 10% rate reduction I spoke to earlier is a lot of money in the hands of Ontario drivers. It's over half a billion dollars in the hands of Ontario drivers that we are giving back to Ontario drivers, that the previous two governments over there took out of their pockets. We plan to continue our aggressive efforts to provide Ontario drivers with a fair and reasonable auto insurance plan.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, we are now beginning to see the results of your government's takeover of education. What we are seeing is the beginning of a flood of pink slips. Today 272 educational assistants in the Halton Board of Education are receiving their layoff notices. This is 65% of the educational assistants in that board. These people are losing their jobs because your funding formula doesn't allow money for the services they provide to students. The students are losing the services because you don't seem to understand what these people do in the classroom. What difference do you think the loss of 272 educational assistants will make to the students of the Halton board?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): I would say to the member from Thunder Bay that what we will see this year and over the next few years is more money going into the classrooms of Ontario, \$583 million more going into the classrooms in Ontario, and less money going to consultants, less money going to administration; less money going out of the classroom, more money going into the classroom. Over the course of the next year and the next three years, we will see more teachers in the classroom; we will see more textbooks in the classroom; we will see more computers in the classroom for our students; we will see more resources

going to libraries, to guidance, to paraprofessionals. We will see more money going where it counts: to the student, into the classroom.

Mrs McLeod: There is in fact \$900 million in new cuts in the funding formula, and cuts mean layoffs and loss of services to today's students; 272 educational assistants in the Halton board today. In the Lakehead today, 125 educational assistants are receiving their layoff notices. That's the entire support staff for junior and senior kindergarten. It is going to happen in every board because you're providing only \$5 per year per elementary school student for educational assistants and nothing for secondary school students. It's going to happen because your budget for special education is inadequate.

Minister, the people being laid off in Halton today are the people who provide the supports to special needs kids, the supports that keep those children in the classroom. They're the people who take those children to the bathroom. They're the people who walk those children to the school bus to make sure they get home at the end of the day. They're the people who literally hold the hands of the special needs children, who cannot work unless they're getting one-to-one support.

This is a cut that hurts kids in the classroom. It's a cut that hurts the neediest of our children. It may shut them out of the classroom altogether. Will you go back to the drawing-board?

1440

Hon David Johnson: The member from Thunder Bay has a different definition of "cut" than I have. This government has provided stable funding of over \$13 billion in each of the next three years. It's a fact; it's an absolute fact.

The member talks about junior kindergarten. The member opposite knows full well that this government has given every board in the province the money to establish either a junior kindergarten program or another early childhood education program in keeping with the nature of that particular community — \$100 million more money into the system over the next year for early childhood education or junior kindergarten at the choice of the community.

Along with the stable funding, we've provided transition funding to assist boards through the amalgamation period. We've instituted a textbook and resource fund. There will be more money spent this year in the classroom in Ontario than ever before in the history of the province.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is to the Minister of Health. I really want to talk to you about this announcement you made today about the expansion of long-term care.

Indeed you've made a splash in terms of convincing people that you are going to solve the problems that are faced all over the province. By adding together eight years of increases, by ignoring the fact that the numbers of

people who are going to need those services are growing exponentially, by ignoring the fact that you've starved the system for three years, you now have made this announcement and you think it makes everything all better.

But what you've really done is announce that our health care is going to move from the publicly funded, publicly accountable system under the Canada Health Act that's offered in hospitals, particularly for chronic care patients — move them into the privatized area where they are not covered —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question.

Mrs Boyd: — by public accountability or by public funds, and in fact, knowing the way you operate, into the profit-making system.

Minister, what we want to know is, when are you going to guarantee —

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): We have already come up with new design standards for the long-term-care facilities. Indeed there had been no new designs in the province for over 20 years, and unfortunately, people were still being accommodated, as they are today, in ward-like facilities. Also there is a lack of privacy when it comes to washroom facilities.

We have this past year, in consultation with consumers and with those who are in the health care field, in the facility long-term-care field, come up with new design standards. These new design standards already are going to improve the quality of life for people who are living in these long-term-care facilities.

It will mean that there will be no more than two residents in a room. It will mean that there are private washrooms. It will mean that there is wheelchair accessibility. It will mean that there is special facility accommodation for those with Alzheimer's. It certainly will mean —

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon Mrs Witmer: — that there is the appropriate level of funding and care being provided and that design standards have been set that respond to the needs of people in the long-term care —

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mrs Boyd: Madam Minister, the design standards were not set by you. I can see the member for Huron county. She knows that those design standards were used in the rebuild of her home for the aged. In Windsor, in London at Mount Hope, new design standards were already in place.

If all you can say to the transfer of people into a privatized system, a system that under your government is becoming more and more two-tiered, more and more a system where if you have money you get one level of care and if you don't have money you don't — sure, in the long-term-care system you've changed the standards. Indeed you have. People used to have the assurance that their loved ones were getting at least two hours of nursing care in those facilities. One of the first actions you did was to take that regulation away. Why? Because of flexibility,

you say. Well, flexibility means driving down standards, and it's been shown again and again by study after study —

The Speaker: Question.

Mrs Boyd: — that that's what you mean by flexibility.

So I ask you again, Minister, what are you going to do to really ensure that the standards of health care are maintained when you —

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Speaking of standards, I would again remind them that new design standards have recently been set. I would just indicate to you that, as a result of the announcement today, we have taken a very significant step in this province in ensuring a better quality of life for individuals as well as appropriate levels of care. I'd just like to read from the release that has gone out today from the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario where they say they applaud the announcement:

"The additional funding will enable agencies to increase their complement of registered nurses and registered practical nurses to a level that better reflects the more acute needs of patients and residents. The nursing professional is encouraged by the government's recognition of need for such an investment in long-term care and is hopeful that this is a significant step in closing many of the gaps in access."

This announcement today is recognized by providers.

TRANSFER OF PROVINCIAL HIGHWAYS

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): My question today is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, you've now completed the transfer of roads from the province to the municipalities. You've given them a one-time grant in order to maintain these roads.

While this part of the transfer has worked well, the naming of these highways is creating problems. I've had several contacts in my constituency office from confused residents and visitors travelling through Simcoe East. For example, Highway 93, running through Simcoe county, has been changed to County Road 31. Why could these familiar highways not have kept the same name as before the transfer? Why couldn't Highway 93 have been named County Road 93 for the area where it cuts through the county?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Transportation): I'd like to thank the honourable member for Simcoe East for the question. I'm pleased to hear that the honourable member agrees with the government that the transfer of the highways went well. Indeed, we attempted to work with every municipality affected by the transfers to make sure the transfers were as smooth as possible. Simcoe county alone received approximately \$4.3 million for 63 kilometres of highway, including 93.

With regard to the numbering of transferred roads, I want to assure the honourable member that my ministry made every effort to ensure that the same number designation was retained after the transfer. We're aware that a

number of local residents and the travelling public had become familiar with those names. We wanted to avoid confusion. Highway 93 is a very interesting case because the county received two sections of that road, 93 south of Highway 400 and 93 north of 12. In one case, they agreed to the same numbering system; in the other case, they changed it. Unfortunately, that's the operation of the municipality. They have that right.

Mr McLean: The fact is: Who is responsible for the naming of these roads? Was it the ministry? Was it the county? Whose jurisdiction? Many other roads in the county have been named the same.

Interjections.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): What about the —

The Speaker: Member for Lake Nipigon, the member for Simcoe East has a right to put his question. Please give him the opportunity.

Mr Pouliot: It's a disgrace.

The Speaker: Member for Lake Nipigon, come to order.

Mr McLean: Obviously the opposition is not interested in how these roads were named. My constituents want to know who made the decision to change the name to County Road 31 from Highway 93. Highway 12 has been changed to a county road. Why could those not have been left the same? The road map has already got them in there. Who made the decision that these names are what they are?

Hon Mr Clement: When the highway transfers took place, the municipalities received the right to renumber their new roads. Ministry staff have been talking to all the municipalities, and I've been talking to a number of municipalities, to try to encourage them to, wherever possible, keep the same numbering system. In Simcoe county, the numbering designation for roads that were transferred was the same for Highway 169, Highway 50 and Highway 27. As I stated before though, the municipality had the legal right to rename the highway. I encouraged that county and that municipality to avoid confusion. In one case, they've already renamed provincial Highway 93 down to County Road 93; I think they should do that in the other case as well.

1450

ROAD SAFETY

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I have a question for the Minister of Transportation. Mr Minister of Transportation, for the last two years I've been working with the local police and the local elected officials over trying to do something about high-collision intersections. In my own neighbourhood there were 10 people hit by red-light runners. Unfortunately, one person was killed.

As you know, cities like Toronto, Mississauga, Ottawa and Hamilton have come to the conclusion that they would like to try these red-light cameras to try and stop this epidemic. It's estimated that possibly 10,000 people a year run these red lights.

I can't understand why you won't at least let them try them, given that in Australia they reduced red-light running by about 72%. They reduced red-light running in Scottsdale, Arizona, by 62%. These local councils and concerned citizens are saying, "Why not give it a try, given the evidence?"

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Transportation): I thank the honourable member for the question. I know that on our side of the House when we were in opposition we agreed with the Liberal opposition that photo-radar was not the answer. That's all part of the record. I think the important point, then as now, is that we want to identify the driver, put the sanctions on the driver. Indeed, this government supports front-line policing activities to combat this dangerous offence, because we know it is a dangerous offence that has to be remedied.

In the honourable member's city of Toronto, the police recently nabbed over 1,200 violators because they were there at the scene. They were able to issue demerit points, they were able to issue fines to the drivers. We support any policy that does that, that identifies the driver. My only reply to the honourable member from the Liberal caucus is that of all the range of options to tackle red-light running, why is he supporting the option that is the least effective to identify —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

Mr Colle: In response, I support all the options like more police enforcement, and I think we all support those. But it's quite evident you would bankrupt most municipalities if you tried to babysit these intersections with police officers. You couldn't do it. The police in Toronto say they can't afford to do it. What they do say is, "Why not use technology that works everywhere in the world that helps police, that makes their job more effective and saves lives?"

I ask the minister to look beyond the argument about technology to the fact that in recent days not too far from Queen's Park we've had two young girls run over by a red-light runner —

The Speaker: Member for Oakwood, come to order. Minister.

Hon Mr Clement: I can only quote from Hansard of October 21, 1993: "You just pay your \$75 or \$100, whatever the fine is, and then you'll continue speeding, because there is no real sanction other than the payment of fines. That of course concerns me."

Interjection: Who said that?

Hon Mr Clement: Tim Murphy, Liberal MPP, St George-St David.

Let me put another quote on the record.

Mr Christopherson: So much for listening.

Hon Mr Clement: Speaking of listening, here's what the Police Association of Ontario had to say: "We believe that cameras on red lights is simply an attempt to raise revenues under the guise of public safety." A tax grab, Mr Speaker. We're not in favour of tax grabs. We're in favour of something that will be effective to get at that aggressive driver. That is our policy.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Minister, as you're aware, Marilyn Churley, the MPP for Riverdale, and I have been persistent, to say the least, in pursuing democratic representation on behalf of the people of East York.

Yesterday I tabled a new private member's bill to give effect to the city of Toronto's request for a third councillor for the ward of East York. Minister, today I am asking you state in this House that you're going to live up to your commitment to respect the democratic wishes of the new city. Yesterday you said that the city had not asked you yet and I provided you with a copy of the official request from the city that was sent to you on April 21.

Minister, today please make the people of East York happy. Colin McLeod from Team East York is here. Tell him that you're going to respect their need for democratic representation. Tell all of us that you're finally going to make the legislative provision for that third councillor for East York.

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the member of the third party for the question. She's absolutely right. In this House in the last session the member asked for a third representative and I, at that time, said that should be the responsibility of the newly elected council of the city of Toronto. If the newly elected council felt in its wisdom that a third member was necessary, then it would have the right to do that. They have deliberated on that subject and have determined that, in their view, a third member is required. If they want to do that, I would certainly support their request as I committed to do previously.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I'd like to thank the minister for at last listening to the people of East York in restoring some form of democracy to East York after the disaster of the megacity. I'm very glad, and I'm sure Mr McLeod and Michael Prue and all of the citizens of East York are very happy today to hear you say that.

What I would like to ask you is when you are going to move on this. Are you going to support the member for Beaches-Woodbine's private member's bill? Are you going to introduce your own? This party, and I think I've heard it from the Liberal Party, is willing to help and facilitate and do everything we can to expedite this. Could you tell us today that you will introduce this or proceed with this immediately so that we can proceed and have the by-election by September, which is what the people of East York have asked for?

Hon Mr Leach: I thank the member for the question. The member for Beaches-Woodbine provided me a copy of the resolution from the city of Toronto today but I must tell them I have not officially received it from the city itself. As soon as we do that, we'll act—

Ms Lankin: Your office has. It came last week.

Hon Mr Leach: To my knowledge, it is not in my office at this time. However, as soon as it arrives we'll

take whatever action is appropriate to implement the request.

I've stated repeatedly that the decisions on the makeup of council and the decisions on the makeup of community councils are the responsibility of the duly elected members of the city of Toronto council. I personally think it's a move in the wrong direction. Rather than going up, they should be going down, and I notice that the mayor the other day suggested that the size of council should be cut in half, which is probably a step in the right direction. However, that is their decision. They were elected to make those decisions, they have done that and we will honour that process.

SPEECH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West): My question is to the minister responsible for children. Minister, on March 30 you came to Hamilton and you met with people at a round table discussion, members in our community concerned about children's issues. The focused discussion went around issues revolving around children and programs that actually work and how we can build on those programs to address issues responding to children's needs.

One of the things we hear time and time again is that the earlier we can help these children out the better their futures will be. I was pleased that while you were there we were able to make an announcement as well in funding for one of this government's important initiatives, which is the early intervention and prevention initiative on pre-school speech and language programs.

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For the benefit of the opposition members, who don't seem to understand the importance of some of these reinvestments we're making, could you provide us with details on how this program will make a significant difference to people in Hamilton-Wentworth?

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [children's issues]): I would like to thank the member for Hamilton West for the question. I also would like to thank you for being proactive in organizing the round table. Those discussions around this province were very helpful.

I agree this is an extremely important program and it will have a tremendous impact on children who have difficulty with their speech and language development. You only have to speak to the mothers and the parents of those children to know how much it means to them. Our reinvestment of \$320,000 in preschool speech and language programs in Hamilton-Wentworth will benefit approximately 3,500 children in the region. If you think of 3,500 children who may otherwise have gone the first five years of their lives not being able to communicate, it's astounding. Our program will provide them with the professional help they need before they start school and they will then have the ability to communicate and the confidence they need to succeed at school and beyond.

Mrs Ross: As parents, we all understand that most parents want to give their children all the support they can to help their children grow and learn. Sometimes, though,

parents need extra supports to teach their children how to communicate. How can parents access and use this program to their best advantage to help their children?

Hon Mrs Marland: Parents are often the first ones to see that their young child may need extra help to learn how to express themselves. Parents will have direct access to these programs, and I think that's one of the best features of the programs themselves. A parent who suspects their child may have difficulties communicating can get in touch with the program, making earlier intervention easier. Self-referral by the parents is a very important aspect.

Parent support and education will also be a large part of this program, so young children will know that mom and dad are there to help them learn, and families will be able to see and understand the progress their child is making. To the parents of the 75,000 children province-wide who will benefit from our \$20-million reinvestment, this program will help them give their children the best start in life.

RURAL PHYSICIAN SHORTAGE

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): My question is to the Minister of Health. As you know, we're facing a crisis in doctor recruitment and retention all across the province, your own community of Kitchener-Waterloo being a notable example. In northwestern Ontario, we're short at least 46 family doctors and 25 specialists, and are in fact losing physicians all across the region. Yet the beginnings of a real solution to this crisis may have been in place when there was a commitment last year of \$36 million to our medically underserved communities — a promise made, but now another promise broken, as not one penny of that money has been spent on recruiting and retaining doctors in our underserved areas.

Minister, this past March 2 you met with Dr George Macey, of the Northwest Chamber of Commerce, and Dr Michael Sylvester, a Marathon physician, who brought you a plan they believe will solve the chronic doctor shortages in northern and rural communities, a plan that has been endorsed by the Ontario Medical Association executive, PAIRO, NOMA, FONOM. Minister, they are confused and frustrated because you have not responded to that and you have not funded this program at all. Can you please tell us why you won't let this carefully worked out plan go forward, why you won't support these locally made decisions?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): Yes, certainly we are doing everything possible in order to ensure that the appropriate physicians can be allocated to the communities. As you know, there is the \$36 million that has been set aside. I understand that there are ongoing discussions. The money is ready to be provided. We are presently in negotiations with some of the health care providers and we would hope that the money could soon be flowing there. The money is there, it's ready to go; we're simply waiting for people to take us up on the offer.

PETITIONS

ABORTION

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut;

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures;

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance;

"Whereas the province has exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured;

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures;

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health;

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars to perform abortions."

This is signed by approximately 1,300 of the residents of Cornwall and SD&G, and I have also signed the petition.

COMMERCIAL CONCENTRATION TAX

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): This petition is signed by a couple of hundred people and it reads as follows:

"Re the petition for commercial tax increases:

"We revoke this ridiculous commercial tax increase that the provincial government of Mike Harris will implement this year.

"We, the signed below, are against this outrageous increase. We are the small businesses of Metropolitan Toronto who have employees counting on us to keep our businesses open so they can feed their families and provide for shelter.

"You, Mr Harris, are forcing us to close our commercial stores, lay off our employees and ultimately sell our properties and making this wonderful Metropolitan Toronto a ghost town. Small businesses such as these have made Toronto grow to the size it is today and by this commercial tax increase we will have lost all that we have worked hard for all these years."

I've signed this petition.

CHIROPRACTIC HEALTH CARE

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislature. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health has recently strengthened its reputation as the Ministry of Medicine through its \$1.7-billion three-year agreement with the Ontario Medical Association; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is restricting access to alternative cost-saving treatments for patients of the province; and

"Whereas the two recent reports commissioned by the Ministry of Health called for increased OHIP funding to improve patient access to chiropractic services on the grounds of safety, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness; and

"Whereas over one million Ontario adults now use chiropractic services annually, increasingly those with higher incomes, because of the cost barrier caused by government underfunding; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has shown blatant disregard for the needs of the citizens of Ontario in restricting funding for chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize the contribution made by chiropractors to the good health of the people of Ontario, to recognize the taxpayer dollars saved by the use of low-cost preventive care such as that provided by chiropractors and to recognize that to restrict funding for chiropractic health care only serves to limit access to a needed health care service."

This is signed by quite a number of constituents in Waterloo region and Wellington county.

CONDITION D'UNE ÉCOLE

M. Gilles E. Morin (Carleton-Est) : J'ai une pétition ici signée par 520 commettants. La pétition se lit comme suit :

«À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

«Attendu qu'il n'existe aucune école francophone dans le quartier de Chapel Hill à Gloucester ;

«Attendu que le bâtiment vétuste de 43 ans occupé par l'école depuis six ans devait être temporaire et avait été condamné en 1983 ;

«Attendu que les francophones attendent toujours à ce que se matérialisent les promesses du gouvernement en matière d'éducation ;

«Nous, les soussignés, pétitionnons l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario comme suit :

«De libérer des fonds pour permettre la construction d'une nouvelle école catholique française à Gloucester dans le secteur de Chapel Hill.»

Il me fait plaisir d'y affixer ma signature.

ABORTION

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

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ABORTION

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): I have a petition from the Knights of Columbus, Orillia Council 1428, Mr Ray Kiley. The petition reads:

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

That's from Orillia and there are about 184 names.

LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD OF ONTARIO

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): My petition is to the government of Ontario.

"Whereas the government of Ontario appears to be moving towards the privatization of retail liquor and spirit sales in the province; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides a safe, secure and controlled way of retailing alcoholic beverages; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides the best method of restricting the sale of liquor to minors in Ontario; and

"Whereas the LCBO has an excellent program of quality control of the products sold in its stores; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides a wide selection of product to its customers in modern, convenient stores; and

"Whereas the LCBO has moved forward with the times, sensitive to the needs of its customers and its clients; and

"Whereas the LCBO is an important instrument for the promotion and sale of Ontario wine and thereby contributes immensely to the grape-growing and wine-producing industry;

Therefore, be it resolved that the government of Ontario abandon its plan to turn over the sale of liquor and spirits to private liquor stores and retain the LCBO for this purpose."

I affix my signature, as I'm in full agreement with this petition.

ACCESS TO CHILDREN IN CUSTODY

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I have a petition that's signed by hundreds of individuals who live in the Sudbury region. It has been organized and given to me by Mrs Winnie of Chelmsford, and I'd like to thank her. It reads as follows:

"To the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas children and grandparents have a fundamental right to have access to each other; and

"Whereas children benefit socially, emotionally and financially by a close relationship with caring and loving grandparents; and

"Whereas Bill 27 would help to eliminate much of the expense and vindictive behaviour so often present in family breakdown; and

"Whereas Bill 27 would remove some of the present backlogs in the family courts; and

"Whereas the province of Alberta recognized the need for legislation broadening grandparents' right to access grandchildren and enacted such a law on September 25, 1997;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately pass Bill 27, An Act to amend the Children's Law Reform Act, which is intended to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their grandparents by specifically mentioning grandparents."

Although Bill 27 has been lost with the start of the new session, I would encourage the Attorney General to bring forward government legislation on this important issue.

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas nurses in Ontario often experience coercion to participate in practices which directly contravene their deeply held ethical standards;

"Whereas pharmacists in Ontario are often pressured to dispense and/or sell chemicals and/or devices contrary to their moral or religious beliefs;

"Whereas public health workers in Ontario are expected to assist in providing controversial services and promoting controversial materials against their consciences;

"Whereas physicians in Ontario often experience pressure to give referrals for medications, treatments and/or procedures which they believe to be gravely immoral;

"Whereas competent health care workers and students in various health care disciplines in Ontario have been denied training, employment, continued employment and advancement in their intended fields and suffered other

forms of unjust discrimination because of the dictates of their consciences; and

"Whereas the health care workers experiencing such unjust discrimination have at present no practical and accessible legal means to protect themselves;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers, prohibiting coercion of and unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary to the dictates of their consciences and establishing penalties for such coercion and unjust discrimination."

This petition is signed by 200 parents and students of the Rehoboth Christian School in my riding.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I have a petition signed by several hundred constituents very concerned about the state of long-term care in Thunder Bay and district. The petition reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Thunder Bay and district are suffering from serious deterioration in our health care system because of the closing of hospital beds before community services and long-term-care facilities are available;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make it an urgent priority to provide more long-term-care services in the home and to provide a sufficient number of long-term-care institutional beds and staff in order to restore the standards of health care to an acceptable level."

I'm very pleased to sign this petition.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas all schools in Ontario should be safe learning and working environments; and

"Whereas all Ontarians should be assured that safe school programs are in place in all Ontario schools; and

"Whereas a private member's bill has been drafted entitled An Act to Promote Safety in Ontario Schools and Create Positive Learning Environments for Ontario Students, 1998; and

"Whereas this bill will:

"Require all boards in Ontario to design and implement school safety programs, school codes of conduct, and anti-vandalism policies;

"Provide for effective early intervention strategies by requiring boards to design and implement anti-bullying policies and by providing boards with the ability to direct psychological assessments of students that they believe are at risk;

"Provide a provincial violence and weapons-free schools policy and allow boards the ability to exclude violent students from regular classroom settings;

"Give police the tools they need by creating a new provincial offence for trespassing on school property and backing it up with real consequences;

"Direct all boards in Ontario to design and implement alternative education programs for suspended and excluded students;

"Require parents to be liable for any damage done to school property by their children; and

"Protect teachers and staff from civil liability.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to pass the Safe Schools Act as quickly as possible."

I have affixed my signature to this petition.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Thunder Bay and district are suffering from serious deterioration in our health care system because of the closing of hospital beds before community services and long-term-care facilities are available;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make it an urgent priority to provide more long-term-care services in the home and to provide a sufficient number of long-term-care institutional beds and staff in order to restore the standards of health care to an acceptable level."

It's signed by a large number of constituents in my riding, and I've affixed my signature in full agreement with their concerns.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition forwarded to me by Mario Cordeiro, who is the working chair of the joint health and safety committee at Cuddy Food Products in London. The petition is signed by members of the United Food and Commercial Workers Local 175. The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas approximately 300 workers are killed on the job each year and 400,000 suffer work-related injuries and illnesses; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario continues to allow a massive erosion of WCB prevention funding; and

"Whereas Ontario workers are fearful that the government of Ontario, through its recent initiatives, is threatening to dismantle workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Whereas the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre have consistently provided a meaningful role for labour within the health and safety prevention system; and

"Whereas the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre have proven to be the most cost-effective prevention organizations funded by the WCB;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately cease the assault on

the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Further we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure that the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre remain labour-driven organizations with full and equitable WCB funding and that the WCB provide adequate prevention funding to eliminate workplace illness and injury."

I proudly add my name to those workers.

ABORTION

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I have a petition signed by 81 people. I present it on behalf of the member for London North. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

1520

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the adjourned debate on the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The Chair recognizes the member for Rainy River.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): Mr Speaker, I will be presenting an amendment to the throne speech at the end of my remarks, but let me say that I am pleased to be able to take part in the debate at this time since there is much I have to say about the throne speech which was presented last Thursday in the Legislature.

I listened last Thursday to the throne speech. I wanted to hear that the government has a strategy, a strategy to address the hundreds of thousands of children in this province who are now living in poverty. I wanted to hear a strategy from the government that says that this government considers all those children living in poverty to be a priority for it. I didn't hear any strategy.

At a time when we desperately need a strategy to reinvest and re-establish our health care system, the government had a few words of rhetoric, a few dribs and drabs, but nothing approaching a strategy for reinvestment in our health care system.

At a time when community after community across this province is feeling that so much of what has made us strong, what has made us a good place to live is now at risk, the government only congratulates itself on producing much of the destruction.

I came away from that speech and someone in the media asked me, "What do you think?" I summed it up this way: "Never before have so few tried so hard to fool so many about so much."

What I heard is a government that is desperately trying to disguise its vision. Make no mistake about this: It's not a government without a vision but a government that is desperately trying to hide from the people of this province what its real vision is. Why? Because it is a vision that most people across Ontario would reject as soon as they got a clear picture of it. It is a vision that owes more to Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher than to any Canadian except Preston Manning. It is a vision that is quite foreign to the values of Ontario people, the values of compassion, of cooperation, of community.

What's in this vision? Let me put it very frankly this way: If the Harris government gets its wish, the quality of health care, the quality of education and even our democratic rights will in the end be determined by the size of our bank accounts. That's where this is going. That's the road of this government and that's the road they want to go down in the future.

Make no mistake about it: Most people in this province would reject that road. People don't believe that access to health care should be measured by the size of your bank account. People don't believe that access to good quality public education should be determined by the size of your bank account. People don't believe that your opportunities in our society, in our province, in our community should be determined by the size of your bank account or your parents' bank account. But that is the direction this government is going in, though it desperately tries to disguise that direction at this point in time.

I want to be clear. Some political leaders in Ontario will tell you that this Conservative government is just going a little too fast and a little too far. I want to be understood clearly on this issue. This is not a matter of a little too fast, a little too far. This is a matter of going in the wrong direction.

Let me put it specifically this way: It is wrong to cut one of the best health care systems in the world in order to finance a tax scheme that's only going to benefit the wealthy, it is wrong to cut one of the better education systems in the world in order to finance a tax scheme that is only going to benefit the wealthy, and it is wrong to slash our community services to finance a tax scheme that is only going to benefit the wealthiest in this province.

It is not just a little too fast, a little too far. It is the wrong direction for the majority of people in this province,

and when they see that more clearly they will reject it. People don't want to go down a road where your value as a human being, your worth as a human being is determined by how much money you have.

I want to focus on this government's tax scheme. I want to focus on it and spend some time looking at what it's doing. Why? Because in my view the majority of middle-income and modest-income families in this province end up paying more taxes than ever before through that tax scheme, only, through its course of deception, this government doesn't call them taxes; they call them tuition fees, copayment fees, administrative fees, user fees, higher property taxes. I want to examine this scheme, because in my view any benefit for middle- and modest-income families is more than cancelled out by those user fees, administrative fees, copayment fees, property taxes and cuts to health care and education — more than cancelled out.

I make this invitation. Speaker, you ought to try this. Take a sheet of paper and on one side of this sheet of paper draw a line down it. On one side of the sheet of paper write down "Harris tax scheme" and on the other side of the paper write down "New user fees, new copayment fees, new administrative fees, new property taxes, cuts to health care, cuts to education, new tuition fees," the whole gamut. Sit down and look at your paycheque or your pension cheque or, I suppose if you're one of the members on the Conservative bench, look at your investment cheque, your most recent notice from our friends on Bay Street. Sit down and take a look and see what you're getting from this tax scheme. When I invite people across the province to do this, many of them chuckle, they laugh: "I haven't seen this tax scheme. I have an income of \$30,000 a year. I haven't seen this tax scheme. I haven't seen any benefit for me."

I ask people, sit down and look at your pension cheque, your paycheque or, in the case of government members, your investment cheque, and write down what you think you get every two weeks. Then on the other side, if you've got a daughter or son in university, you'd better write down \$800 a year, because that's how much university tuition fees have gone up already and by next year they'll be \$1,100. If you've got a son or daughter in community college, write down \$400, because that's how much community college tuition fees have gone up. If they're going to be in community college next year, write down \$500, because they're going up again. If you've got a daughter or son in high school, you might want to ask them about this thing, this new appearance in our high schools. It's called the student activity fee, and the average across Ontario now is \$100 a year.

If you're a senior citizen, like my father, and you have to take prescription medicine in order to maintain your health, add on about \$200 to \$300 in prescription medicine copayment fees, copayment fees which are going up every month.

Then call up your municipal clerk and ask them what the projection is for property taxes. Don't just ask for one

year, but ask what the projection for property taxes is over the next three years.

1530

I know what it is for the majority of municipalities in my constituency. People are looking at \$300 increases, \$400 increases, \$500 increases. But don't just ask for one year, ask for the three-year projection, because I know what the government strategy is. The government is going to take some of the money they got out of the teachers' pension fund a few weeks ago and they're going to splash some of it around to cover this up. But the money they've taken out of the teachers' pension fund will only last for a couple of years, and after that runs out, those property taxes are going to shoot up dramatically.

I invite people to do that. On one side of the page try to figure out that little bit you got out of the Harris government's tax scheme, and on the other side of the page add up the university tuition fees, the college tuition fees, the high school student activity fee, the prescription medicine copayment fee, property taxes, birth certificates — the price of a birth certificate doubled in the province under this government. Add them all up and then compare them. While you're doing it, ask yourself what it means. Can you can place a value on losing one of the best health care systems in the world? Can you place a value on watching what even the Premier describes, when he is outside the country, as one of the best education systems in the world — can you place a value on losing that?

For the majority of middle- and modest-income people in this province, when they actually tally what they get out of the tax scheme, I think, to use one of the Premier's most recent obsessions, one of his most recent fascinations, most people might find they get maybe a six-pack of beer every two weeks, and that's it, at the expense of one of the best health care systems, of one of the best education systems, and at the expense of communities that are now being riddled with reductions in services like public health, ambulance, services for senior citizens, housing for senior citizens, children's programs, recreation programs.

There was a great irony during the throne speech, a great irony watching this government introduce some of the Olympic athletes, because I'm sitting there, and I've got my sheet, and I know this government has essentially eliminated funding for recreation programs in every community across this province. When I talk to schools across this province and they tell me about this phoney in-classroom, out-of-classroom way of now determining education funding, they all say there is virtually no money left in the budget for athletic or recreation programs at the school level.

So a government tries to congratulate itself on the presence of some Olympic athletes here, but the reality is that this government has virtually wiped out the capacity of our communities to work with athletes like that in the future. What duplicity.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Hypocrisy.

Mr Hampton: What hypocrisy to try to take advantage of those Olympic athletes when, if you just look at the surface of this, you'll see that recreation funding for

communities across this province has been eliminated and schools are going to be hard-pressed to put together recreation and athletic programs for their students in the future.

But that's the reality of this tax scheme. It's a reality that people need to understand, a reality that people need to check for themselves and to do for themselves.

There's more to this, though, than that comparison, because once an individual has an income of about \$80,000 a year, the picture starts to change. You see, if an individual has an income of about \$80,000 a year, suddenly the equation goes the other way and the tax scheme starts to overwhelm the new copayment fees, the new tuition fees, the new user fees, the new administrative fees and the property taxes. If an individual has an income of \$100,000 — I notice now the Conservative members are starting to smile; I wonder why — if you get up over \$100,000, \$125,000 a year, \$150,000, the tax scheme far overwhelms the new user fees and the new tuition fees. At \$200,000 a year income for an individual it becomes very lucrative.

That's the reality of this tax scheme. The only people who benefit from this government's tax scheme are the wealthiest people in this province. The vast majority of middle- and modest-income families are paying more hidden taxes than ever before.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Harris said they were taxes, those user fees, and they'd never increase them.

Mr Hampton: Yes, that's the irony of this. When the now Premier was in opposition, he referred to tuition fee increases, property tax increases, user fee increases, copayment fee increases and administrative fee increases as tax increases.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): That was then.

Mr Hampton: That was then, this is now. Now he doesn't want to talk about any of those things, and if they're ever brought to his attention, he immediately says, "Somebody else did that."

Let there be no mistake about it: These new user fees, prescription medicine copayment fees, the higher rents that senior citizens are going to be paying, all of the new regime of hidden taxes and hidden fees are a product of this government, and those hidden taxes and hidden fees are falling on the working people of this province, the modest-income people of this province, the middle-income people of this province. The only people who are benefiting are the wealthy friends of this government.

There is another part to this tax scheme that has to be examined. I understand that the tax scheme was a vote-getter. I understand the political element of it. Any time you say to somebody, "I can give you something for nothing," some people will vote for it. So part of it was a vote-getter. It was intended to be a vote-getter and it was. But there's an even more insidious part to this tax scheme, what I call the economic element of it. The political right knows, whether they call themselves the Reform Party, the Conservative Party, the Republican Party, the neo-Conservative Party or the neo-Liberal Party —

Interjection: The federal Liberal Party.

Mr Hampton: Yes, the federal Liberal Party. They know that if you buy into that tax scheme, if you institutionalize that tax scheme, then you essentially cripple public education and public health care in the future.

Why? Because that tax scheme right now takes \$5 billion a year out of education and health care. It bleeds money out of health care and education. It bleeds \$1 billion, or soon will, out of communities through downloading. That's what happens. The government takes the money and the provinces pick up the costs of the downloading. Where does the money that the provincial government gets out of downloading go? It goes into the tax scheme.

The problem is that tax scheme takes \$5 billion now out of health care and education and out of communities. If you look down the road a few years, it's going to take \$6 billion out because that's how much it will cost to finance that tax scheme. So you get to the year 2001-02 and you will have to find \$6 billion a year out of health care and education and communities to finance that tax scheme.

The political right knows that if you institutionalize that tax scheme, if they are able to successfully institutionalize that tax scheme, then they will have been successful in undermining public education, public health care and the other public services that have been so important to the development of good communities in this province over the last 50 years.

In that sense you can call the Harris tax scheme the Ronald Reagan tax scheme or the Margaret Thatcher tax scheme. The Reagan tax scheme in the early 1980s decimated public education in that country and essentially created a two-tier education system. People who are well-off send their children to private schools or they create their own sort of wealthy communities where they isolate anybody who doesn't have a high income and it's reflected in the education system. The Reagan tax scheme decimated American cities.

When you go now to the United States too often you see American cities where the core of the city doesn't function any more. People there are poor, they can't get a decent education, they can't get health care.

Mr Pouliot: Trapped.

Mr Hampton: They're trapped. They have a very difficult time getting jobs or being part of the economy. Then you go to another part of the community, a wealthier part of a suburb, and you see the different side of society.

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Reagan understood when he implemented that tax scheme in the United States what it would do to health care, what it would do to education and what it would do to communities: divide society into those who have money and those who don't. Thatcher understood the same thing in Great Britain. She understood that if she could institutionalize her tax scheme and she could institutionalize the selling off of many of those important public services, she would create two societies in Britain, and they have. One part of British society is wealthier than ever; another part of British society can't get the education their

children need, they wait for the health care their children need and they live in communities that are more and more run down.

You could call it the Harris tax scheme, the Reagan tax scheme, the Thatcher tax scheme. It was not only a great vote-getter but is all about taking away the money you need to finance an adequate health care system, a good public education system and to finance the public services that make good communities. The right knows that if you can institutionalize that tax scheme, in the future in a province like Ontario we'll never be able to find quite enough money to adequately fund education, we'll never be able to find quite enough money to adequately fund public health care, and they know it will create the two-tier system. People who have money will more and more opt to private systems of acquiring health care and people who are dependent on the public system will find that the system is more and more underresourced, underfinanced and you have to wait to get the health care that you need.

Bill 160 is all about creating the framework for the privatization of education. You underfund it, because you take the money away through the tax scheme, and then through Bill 160 you underfund the classrooms, you underresource the classrooms in the schools. Some parents say: "I will not send my children to an underfunded, underresourced public school. I want to send my children to a private school. I want a voucher school. I want a charter school." This government is going to be right there egging that on and supporting it, creating a two-tier education system.

All I can say to you is that you understand it. You know where you want to go. For God's sake, be honest with the people of Ontario and tell them that that's where you want to go. Don't try to use your throne speech to cover it. Don't try to use your throne speech to finesse it. Be honest with people. Tell them that this is where you're going so that they know in the next election what it is they're voting for and what it is this holds in the future, and what it is they're voting against.

A few days ago I had an opportunity to engage in a bit of a debate on CFRB radio. It was supposed to be a leaders' debate. The Premier didn't show — he doesn't show for many of these — but the leader of the Liberal Party, Mr McGuinty, did show. We got into a discussion about health care and education. He said he wants to invest in health care and education. That's what he said. I said, "Well, if we want to invest in health care and education, we have to find the money." Right? Let's be clear with people. You can't invest in good health care unless you're willing to put some money into it and you can't invest in education unless you're willing to put some money into it.

I was asked by the broadcaster, "How would you find it, Mr Hampton?" I said very clearly: "Look, the only people who've benefited from this tax scheme are individuals who have incomes of \$80,000 a year and up. Everybody else is paying more taxes: hidden taxes, hidden user fees." I said I believe higher-income people who have benefited from that tax scheme now have an obligation, a

social responsibility to make a contribution towards health care, education and our communities. I would take back the tax scheme from the high-income people who have benefited from that tax scheme and I would put the money in health care, in education and in our communities.

Then the announcer said to Mr McGuinty, "Where would you do this? Would you ask high-income people to now reinvest in health care, education and our communities? Would you reverse the tax scheme for the highest-income people in Ontario?" I was struck, because it became apparent to me then and there that the Liberal Party in Ontario actually buys into that tax scheme, because the response was, "No, high-income people who have benefited from that tax scheme should not reinvest in health care and education." The response was that no, there would be no reversal of that tax scheme in so far as it affects high-income people.

I put it this way: Individuals who have incomes of \$80,000 and above are in the top 6% of income earners in the province. They get 25% of the benefits from that tax scheme. So 6% of the people in the province get 25% of the benefit of the tax scheme, and I said that those are the people who ought now to reinvest. We ought to reverse the tax scheme. These people have a social responsibility to reinvest in health care, education and our communities.

The response from the Liberal leader was, "No" — wouldn't do it. The moderator of this discussion said, "Then where would you find the money?" The response from the Liberal Party went something like this: If there were a Liberal government, the Liberal government would wait for a surplus. In other words, a Liberal government would wait until the Harris government has hacked and slashed health, hacked and slashed education and continued to decimate our communities. Then in the year 2001 or 2002, if a surplus became available, there might be some reinvestment.

There's a problem with that theory and that strategy. We live in a market economy. The reality of market economies is that they boom and then they bust. We had a real bust in North America in the period about 1982 to 1984. The Davis Conservative government ran up very large and significant deficits then; the Liberal government in Ottawa ran up very large and significant deficits. The bust ended at about 1984 and then the economy boomed from 1985 until about 1989. Then there was another bust starting in the fall of 1989, continuing until the spring of 1993.

Now, since 1993, we've been in a boom again. From 1993 until now, about 1998, we've been in a boom. We're headed at some point over the next couple of years for a recession. If the strategy of the Liberal Party is, "We'll wait for a surplus and then we'll reinvest," and you hit a recession, then when does the reinvestment happen? It doesn't happen.

I want to say to our colleagues over here in government, be honest about what you stand for. I'm saying to the Liberal Party that you should be very clear in telling people that the only way you'll reinvest in health care and education is if a surplus happens to come. You should tell

them that you buy into this tax scheme. You should tell them that, because you do.

The reality of that debate is that a Liberal government would buy into this tax scheme. A Liberal government would buy in, would institutionalize that tax scheme, would institutionalize the cuts to health care, to education and to communities. I wouldn't. That's why, despite the fact that I didn't hear much in this throne speech that I thought was very inspiring, the throne speech does serve a useful purpose: It helps us to sharpen the debate about what the real choices are for the future of this province.

In my view, you can go down the right-wing road, the right-wing vision very quickly with the current government or you can go there slowly with the Liberal government, which buys into the same tax scheme, buys into the same cuts to health care, to education and to community in order to finance that tax scheme; or people can choose a different direction. I want to spend some time talking about the different direction.

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I recognize that whether you're in the United States after Ronald Reagan, or whether you're in Great Britain with Margaret Thatcher, or whether you're with the Harris government, or the Klein government in Alberta, or more and more the Chrétien government in Ottawa, people will more and more be measured by the size of their bank accounts. If people have large bank accounts, they will be able to access health care when and where they need it. But if people don't have sizeable bank accounts, people more and more will be forced to wait for adequate health care.

As we're seeing, particularly at the university and college level now, by the year 2000 the federal government, the Chrétien government in Ottawa will have cut \$3 billion from post-secondary education. As a result of those cuts and further cuts added on by this government, it is already the case now in Ontario that if you have money, you can get access to university and college, but if you don't have money, you either end up with enormous debt or you don't go. That is the real situation facing young people in this province today. That happens to young people because we now have a government here in Ontario, and I argue a government in Ottawa, that believes that people should be measured by the size of the wallet, the size of the bank account. That is what's happening.

The political right knows that that's where this is going; that's where they want to go. Just be open and honest and tell people that. I would say to my Liberal colleagues, be open and honest that you buy into this to a large extent, that you would end up in the same place, you'd just go there a little slower. In only a matter of months, people across this province will have to make a decision about who will govern this province.

I say again that you can take a fast ride down the right-hand road with the Harris government or you can take a slower ride with a Liberal government. We want to go in a different direction. As I said, we believe that the only people who benefit from that tax scheme are the wealthiest

people in this province. Everyone else — working families, modest-income families, middle-income families — is paying more. The poorest people in this province have taken a huge cut in income, a 22% cut in their income, a cut in income that is having a devastating effect on children in this province. Why? Because half of the people in this province who rely upon social assistance are children. When this government goes around the province and pats itself on the back for cutting the income of the poorest people in the province by 22%, what they're patting themselves on the back over is cutting the income of 500,000 children in this province.

How do we reinvest in health care? I want to talk about some of the options of that today. I want to talk about some of the options of reinvesting in health care because we need to. It's very clear that much of the so-called investment that the Harris government would put into health care would in fact serve the purpose of further privatizing our health care. That's what's happening in home care. The Harris government has chosen an American model for the delivery of home care. It is turning home care services over to private, for-profit and largely American health care corporations.

In that process, the emphasis on care recedes, the emphasis on making the profit out of health increases. This direction, this move to private, for-profit delivery of home care — and let's be clear, home care is where much of the action's going to be in health care in the future. Home care is going to be where the action is because we know about the technological changes. We know, for example, that 15 years ago if someone tore a knee ligament they'd have to go into a hospital, they'd have to have fairly serious surgery on their knee and there would be a recovery period in hospital of at least five or six days. Now knee surgery involves using an instrument called an arthroscope. It is done on an outpatient basis, usually not even in the hospital; sometimes in a physician's office. You go in in the morning, you receive a local anaesthetic, the arthroscopic surgery is done, they wait around to see that there are no immediate adverse reactions, you go home usually with a prescription for home care, a prescription for anti-inflammatory medicine and a prescription for painkillers. A nurse will come in and check on you every day to continue to ensure that there are no adverse reactions to the surgery or to the medication.

Because of technological changes, home care is where a lot of the action is going to be. We know, for example, that a lot of chemotherapy can now be administered on an outpatient basis. Someone comes into the clinic, they receive the chemotherapy treatment, later on that day they go home with a prescription for home care, a prescription perhaps for some other medicines. A nurse comes in every day to ensure that the patient is not suffering adversely from the chemotherapy treatment or is not suffering any other adverse reactions.

We know that in our health care system home care is where a lot of the action is going to be. Because of our aging population, we know that home care is where a lot of the action is going to be. What is the model this

government has chosen for home care? It has chosen the Americanized, privatized model of home care, the American system where you have a hodgepodge of companies that are driven not by the desire to provide care but by the desire to make a profit out of health.

I want to contribute the experience in Manitoba. The Conservative government in Manitoba was going down the same road with respect to home care. They turned it over, essentially, to private, for-profit corporations, many of them American corporations. However, people in Manitoba put up such fierce opposition that the Manitoba government — a Conservative government there too — had to bow to that pressure and agree that they would conduct an evaluation of the home care system in that province after a year and a half down the privatization road. They brought in some outside evaluators, outside consultants, to look at the home care system and what was happening to it as it moved in that American direction. Do you know what they found? They found three things.

First, the quality and the quantity of care that patients were receiving was going down. More and more of those American corporations were actually setting time quotas for nurses and homemakers: "You're only allowed so much time to do this, so much time to do that." Patients were complaining, "I can't get adequate home care."

What was the second thing that was happening? Trained nurses and homemakers were leaving the system. Why? First of all, they were leaving because they didn't want to be part of a system that they did not see as having any integrity any more. They did not want to whistle into someone's home, do this for five minutes, that for three minutes, something else for two minutes and go out the door knowing the patient they left behind felt they were not receiving the care they needed. So trained nurses and trained homemakers started leaving the system in Manitoba, because they didn't want to participate in something that didn't have integrity to it.

They were also leaving for another reason. Why were they leaving? Because those American health care corporations put in place a persistent and consistent strategy to screw down the wages and the benefits of those very people who worked in the system. That's where you get the profit: You limit the care that the patient receives and you screw down the wages and the benefits and the working conditions of the nurses and the homemakers in the system. That's where you get the profit.

What's the third thing they found in their evaluation? The third thing they found was that those American health care corporations that were taking over home care were indeed making very lucrative profits.

Here's the scenario: The patients lose, the dedicated health care workers lose, but the corporation that's in it for money, not to provide care, benefits. In the face of that independent evaluation — and the Minister of Health ought to hear this — the Conservative government in Manitoba said: "That's it. We're not proceeding down the road of privatizing home care. We're not proceeding down the road of privatizing Manitoba's health care system

through the back door." I say to the Minister of Health, you would be wise to make the same choice in Ontario.

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Mr Wildman: Talk to your colleague in Winnipeg.

Mr Hampton: Call your colleague in Winnipeg and ask for the results of that study. Ask them what they found was happening to patients, what was happening to nurses and the trained health care workers and how those companies were screwing their profit out of the system, out of health care. I'm not interested in that vision for health care in Ontario. I'm not interested in bringing a hodgepodge of American companies to Ontario that are more interested in profit than they are in health care.

People across this province ought to reflect on what is the American health care system. In the United States, 42 million Americans have no health coverage at all. By the latest estimates there are 80 million Americans who have something they call health insurance, until they take the time to read the exception clauses, the exclusion clauses and the limitation clauses. When they do that, when those 80 million who think they have health insurance read the exclusion, the exception and the limitation clauses, they find that that private health insurance isn't worth very much. It doesn't provide either a lot of health care or the adequate health care they will need when they face very serious situations.

Is that what we want here in Ontario? Do we want to have a health care system where more and more people aren't covered and more and more people think they have coverage but find it's not adequate? I don't think so.

There is something else people need to know about that hodgepodge of private for-profit companies in the United States. Americans actually spend more on health care than we do here. Americans actually spend 13 cents out of every dollar on health care, measured as part of their GNP; out of every dollar in the economy, 13 cents goes to health care. In Ontario it's about nine cents.

Why has the Harris government chosen a direction for home care that's going to mean less care, is going to mean more and more trained health care workers leaving the system, but as we know from the American experience, is going to cost us more money? That's the choice they've made. All you need to do is look at the facts from across the border in the United States to see what is happening. You get less health care and it costs you more money. That's the direction the Harris government has picked for home care, which is where most of the action is going to be in health care in Ontario for the next 15 to 20 years. Home care is going to be critical and they've picked the American model.

I want to be very clear on where I stand on home care. Home care is needed. It is necessary — absolutely essential. I recognize that the world is changing. I recognize that many of our institutions have to change, and health care has to change. My colleagues here, the member for Beaches-Woodbine and my former colleague from Etobicoke-Lakeshore, did much of the work on charting a course whereby our health care institutions would change. But we were very clear on something. We

were very clear that what you needed to do before you closed hospitals and before you started taking services out of hospitals was to build up those home care services and those community care services.

This government hasn't done that. Not only have they made the wrong choice in terms of taking the American model for home care; what this government did was they closed hospitals and cut hospital services without building up the services in the community, without building up the home care, without building up the community care services.

That's why we have gridlock in Ontario today. People get pushed out of hospital sicker. They go home. They're told they can get home care. They get home and find they can't get home care or it's very limited. They get more and more sick and wind up back in hospital, but there aren't enough acute care beds. You can't get into an acute care bed, so you get put in the emergency room and you spend your time, sometimes a couple of days, in the emergency room or in the hallway outside the emergency room in the gridlock that the Harris government has created in our health care system. They have taken one of the best health care systems in the world and are now starting to decimate it. To the extent that they are introducing anything new to it, all they're introducing is a very inefficient, Americanized model of home care, not the direction we want to go in at all.

What are some of the things we ought to do? Let me use diabetes as an example of the kinds of choices we need to make. By the way, for the government I was part of, this is a choice we made. You can choose to get involved early. You can choose to invest in providing people with some tools to maintain and sustain their own health. That's what I call public health or intervention at the front end: wellness promotion, illness prevention.

You can choose to do that, or you can choose to not do that and then let people get sicker and deal with them after they're sick. This government has chosen that latter route. This government is not going to fund public health any more. This government is not going to fund many of those early interventions. They are in fact going to take public health and throw it down on municipalities: municipalities that don't have the money, municipalities that don't have the geographic scope, and municipalities that frankly don't have the expertise to provide that kind of early intervention.

So let me use diabetes as an example of what happens when you don't intervene early, what happens when you take the direction this government has followed.

If you intervene early in terms of diabetes, if you provide people with some tools to maintain and sustain their own health, the vast majority of people — and there are literally tens of thousands of sufferers of diabetes across this province. I know because I have a great number in my own constituency, in my own community. There are tens of thousands of diabetes sufferers across this province. If you invest at the front end and you provide people with some tools to maintain and sustain

their own health, the vast majority of people can lead a normal life and can deal with their diabetes.

What are those tools? There are about five or six rules. One is you've got to maintain a regular diet; you've got to be thoughtful about your diet. Two, you have to get regular exercise, about 45 minutes a day of bicycling or walking or jogging. Three, you should abstain from alcohol. Four, you need to watch your blood sugar level. Five, I'm told you can't go out and howl at the moon at night; you have to get regular rest.

Interjections.

Mr Hampton: There are some members in my own back bench who feel badly about that. I'll deal with them later, Speaker.

The point is that for a very meagre investment at the front end in terms of diabetes, people can sustain and maintain their own health.

What happens if you don't invest at the front end? What happens if you do as this government is doing, if you don't invest in public health, if you throw public health on municipalities and say: "You fund it. You fund it even though there's no money. You look after it even though you don't have the geographic scope. You look after it even though you don't have the expertise and experience"?

What happens if people suffer from diabetes and you don't provide them with some tools to maintain and sustain their own health? The evidence is everywhere. If people are not given help to deal with diabetes as a disease, kidney dialysis follows; kidney dialysis is expensive. Kidney transplants follow; they're expensive. Limb amputation follows; that's expensive. It's expensive in terms of suffering to people and it's expensive for the health care system. Blindness follows, and finally a very high incidence of heart disease and heart attacks.

Anyone looking at this would say, "Gee, the most intelligent thing we could do in the health care system would be to make investments in the front end, provide people with some tools and some strategies to maintain and sustain their own health." Don't deny those strategies. Don't deny those tools. It's absolutely important that we help people sustain their health. If you don't make those investments, it costs you a lot of money in terms of human suffering and in terms of health care costs and social costs down the road.

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What's the choice this government has made? This government has made the choice not to invest in the front end but to cost the system a lot more down the road. Wrong choice. What choice would I make? Public health has to be a priority. Public health has to be one of the most important priorities, and investing in maintaining people's health has to be the biggest priority.

That's where we part company with this government. That's one of the first places we part company. As I emphasize again, we would in no way entertain the American model of privatized home care. Wrong choice.

Where else could we make a huge difference? I notice that the government is sort of thinking about alternative

payment strategies for physicians. The government is sort of thinking about moving off fee for service in a couple of locations.

If I could urge the government to do anything, it would be to aggressively work with communities and physicians who want to move away from fee for service and who want to move to a salary scale or who want to move to a community health delivery system.

There are too many communities across this province that can't get adequate physicians and can't get adequate coverage from other health care workers through the fee-for-service model. Those communities are lined up at the door of the Ministry of Health to look at other models of delivering and paying for health care.

I can say very clearly to all the people across Ontario, and I say it especially to the Minister of Health, who's here: Move aggressively on this front. The fee-for-service system, especially when you're talking about primary care, has all kinds of inadequacies in it.

I have spoken to a number of physicians who say: "I don't like my income as a physician depending upon how many people I can push through the door every day. I would much rather have a system where I have time to address the real issues with the patients who come to see me. I would much rather have a system where I actually have the time to sit down with those patients and work with them in terms of a strategy to maintain and sustain their own health."

I think it's absolutely essential for Ontario's health care system that we start to move away from fee for service in terms of primary care and that we build some options and some choices into the system. It's especially critical for all those communities that right now can't get access to health care, access to the health care workers and physicians we need.

I want to talk just a bit about education. I said earlier that Bill 160 is all about preparing the education system for the movement to two tiers, the movement in the American direction: more and more people sending their children to private schools, voucher schools, charter schools, all the same general description of private and two-tier education.

Why is Bill 160 about setting the table, setting that framework? Because it's inherent in Bill 160.

I was fortunate enough to have the deputy minister's employment contract show up in my office one morning. It says right in the deputy minister's employment contract that her job over the next year is to extract another \$700 million from our elementary and secondary schools. That's the real agenda.

I know that if you take another \$700 million out of our elementary and secondary schools, on top of the \$800 million that this government has already taken, you will have to close schools, you will have to in effect start cutting programs, you will have to lay off teachers, lay off school secretaries, lay off custodians, all those things.

I know that when you start to do that, some parents will be driven to send their children to private schools or to start demanding a voucher school or a charter school. It's

already happening. In fact, the funding formula in the first year for education is set in such a way that it is going to drive school boards to close schools. What schools are going to be closed? It will be the smaller schools. It will be the smaller schools in small communities.

Why? Because in the funding formula there is not enough money to provide a custodian in every one of those schools. There's not enough money to provide a school secretary. There's not enough money to provide a principal. There's not enough money to cover the cost of electricity to put on the lights. There's not enough money to cover the cost of heat. There's not enough money to ensure that the roof doesn't leak. That's the direction that the funding formula has set, and so boards of education are already looking at closing schools.

The new Toronto district board is looking at closing 120 schools. The new Niagara Peninsula board is looking at having to close 35 schools. I was in Sudbury a few weeks ago. The Sudbury boards have already identified two schools that are going to close and are looking at least four or five more. Thunder Bay has already identified two schools that are going to close and are already looking at four or five more. Ottawa, I'm told at least 20 schools.

By our account, in talking to the different boards across the province, there are at least 200 schools slated for closure over the next year and a half. That means 2,000 classrooms. Did you ever hear that statement, "No cuts to classrooms"? Did you ever hear that statement that there will be more classroom funding? If you're going to wipe out 2,000 classrooms, I guess that means you then can jiggle the money around so that it looks like you're spending a little bit more in the classrooms you've got left.

But what's really insidious about this is that if you close a community school in a village of 4,000 or 5,000 people, right away what happens is parents call and say: "Look, I do not want to send my children on a bus 20 kilometres to another school. If we can't have a public school in my community, then we're going to organize for a private school." That's exactly the agenda the government wants. This government is going to be right there saying: "Yes. Here's some money for a voucher school. Here's some money for a charter school." That's what this is all about.

That's why I say Bill 160 is all about setting the table, setting the framework for that move to a two-tier American education system, and it will only take about three or four years before you see the outcome. People who have higher incomes will be able to say, and will say, "I'm not sending my children to an underresourced, underfunded public school. I'm going to send my children to a private school, a charter school, a voucher school," and the Harris government will be there to say, "Here is the money to do it, here is public money to create a two-tier education system, where people who have money can get a superior level of education for your children and people who don't have money can send their children to underfunded, underresourced public schools." That's where this is going. The direction could not be more wrong for Ontario. The direction could not be more

wrong, given the knowledge economy that we are now in and that we are moving into more than ever, but that's the direction this government has picked.

What direction would I pick? I've already said it is absolutely wrong to take money out of education, to take money out of our schools to finance a tax scheme that's only going to benefit the wealthiest people in this province. New Democrats would put the money back in. In fact we would set this rule: Any money that is found in education, whether through amalgamation, whether through management changes, whether through administrative changes, any money that is found in education must be reinvested in education.

Where would we make the reinvestment? The first reinvestment that needs to be made is an investment in early childhood education. I know some of the Conservative members over here talk about early childhood education, child care, junior kindergarten and senior kindergarten as glorified baby-sitting. I've heard them say this all the time. They should open a book and read some of the studies that have been conducted here in Canada, some of the studies that have been conducted in the United States and some of the studies that have been conducted in western European countries. All of those studies, no matter where they've been conducted, show essentially the same thing: that for every dollar you invest in early childhood education, you save up to \$7 later on in the system.

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Why is that? The studies show this: Because children start to develop at an early age their capacity to learn, their basic learning ability, if you make an investment there, their capacity to learn grows. Because children develop their coping skills, their ability to deal with stress, their ability to deal with difficult situations at a very young age, if you make an investment in children at that young age, they develop very good coping skills. Because children develop their social skills at a very young age, if you make an investment at that young age, they develop the social skills that are very much part of learning and social interaction, very much part of being a capable, productive adult.

I understand that the government wants Fraser Mustard to do a study. I could say to you he's already done the studies. The studies are all there. He will tell you that if you invest in early childhood education, it actually has a dramatic impact on how the brain of young children eventually becomes wired. It has a dramatic impact not only on the intellectual development of children but on the social development of children, their capacity to deal with a dynamic and changing world. He'll show you his studies and he'll show you studies from around the world and I just urge you to read them. You don't need to ask him to duplicate the studies he's already done. His studies are all there. His studies will show you, as I said, that for every dollar you spend in early childhood education you save \$7 down the road.

Where do you save? You save money in not needing as much special education. You save money in children not

dropping out of school either as early or as often. You save money in terms of young people not getting involved with the criminal justice system — the police, the courts and correctional institutions. You save money in terms of young people, when they eventually emerge from the school system, having a much higher rate of employability and you save money in terms of young people not having to rely on our social supports and social assistance system. For every dollar you invest in early childhood education you save \$7 down the road.

If someone could show you an investment where you invest a dollar today and 10 years from now, 12 years from now you get \$7 back, I'd say that's a good investment. I'd say that's a very good investment. That's a much better investment than people are getting from their banks right now. So I'd urge the government and I would say to people, invest in early childhood education. The dividends that pay off down the road are incredible.

Where else do we need to invest? One of the horror stories of this government is that they're cutting adult education. In a world where most people will change vocations three or four or five times because of the demands of that knowledge economy, this government is going to cut adult education. At a time when more and more people during their lifetime will have to go back to school and they will have to broaden their skills, deepen their skills or get new skills, this government is shutting the door on them, a government that brags that it wants more people working and then takes away one of the principal ways that people can get back into the workforce, by cutting adult education. How cynical; how hypocritical to lecture people across Ontario and then to cut the principal way that many people have of getting back into the workforce.

I've visited many of these adult education centres; I've visited many of these adult education high schools. I was to the adult education centre in Sarnia — wonderful place. It's going to close, I should say to the member. You may put it off for a year or so; it's going to close. I was at one in Welland a couple of weeks ago. It's closing. I watched the decision that was forced on the new Toronto District Board of Education, where they're going to have to close the lion's share of their adult education system, put 8,000 students on the street, 8,000 students who want to learn, and lay off 600 teachers; an absurd scenario. At a time when more and more people need to return to school, not once, not twice, but perhaps several times during their life to broaden their skills, deepen their skills or get new skills, this government is going to take that away.

It is absolutely essential in the knowledge economy that adult education not just be restored, but that it be enhanced. Lifelong learning is part and parcel of the knowledge society, part and parcel of the knowledge economy. A government that takes away adult education in the context of that society and that economy is doing everyone in that society a disservice, doing a disservice to those students but doing a disservice to society as a whole.

What would New Democrats do? We would reinvest in adult education. It's one of the best investments we can

make. You cannot put people back into the workforce unless you're willing to invest in their training.

I know the ideological line the government wants to paint. The ideological line is, "Well, these people can go to workfare." Workfare doesn't provide the training you need in this knowledge economy. Workfare doesn't provide any of the other supports you need. Workfare doesn't provide the opportunity to get that practical job experience that is part of this building. What workfare does — and let's recognize this because it's happening wherever your vision of workfare is being tried across this province. What's happening is this: People are being put into a series of deadend activities that have no future, that do not lead to a permanent job, that do not lead to better skills, broader skills, deeper skills. It's a never-ending series of deadend activities. Your workfare is about punishing people who are unemployed. Your workfare is about persecuting people who are unemployed. Your workfare is about taking dignity away from people who are unemployed. It's not about equipping them with skills, it's not about equipping them with practical job experience, it's not about linking them to the new economy; it's about punishing people who are unemployed.

That's why adult education is so important, because adult education provides one of the real options for people who are out of work, who are unemployed and want to get back into the economy, want to get a job that pays, a job that has a future to it. You're taking that away from them.

Where's the third place we need to reinvest? In education. If I seem to be spending a lot of time on education, it is because in a knowledge economy the most essential ingredient is knowledgeable, thoughtful, skilful, capable people. But knowledgeable, thoughtful, skilful, capable people don't grow on trees, and they don't hatch under rocks.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Unlike Tories.

Mr Hampton: Yes, unlike Tories. You have to invest in them; you have to invest in their education. If we want people to be capable, if we want people to be positioned to take part in that knowledge economy, we have to invest in them. What's this government doing? It's de-investing in education, de-investing in universities, de-investing in colleges, de-investing in high schools and elementary schools, de-investing in early childhood education. That is what this government is doing. So we need to spend more time analysing what's at stake here.

The government says it has a new apprenticeship program. What it is is that first of all it's a watering down of apprentice opportunities. It's the de-skilling of apprenticeships and it's also the privatization of apprenticeships. It is, in effect, going to make it more expensive for young people and all people in this province to get into an apprenticeship program, and what comes out of it is going to be a lower level of skill.

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At a time when the knowledge economy demands more skill, more ability, more experience, more judgement, this government is deinvesting in apprenticeships as well.

Wrong direction, wrong choice, absolutely the wrong choice in the context that we're in. If we're going to be part of that knowledge economy, we have to make more thoughtful investments in apprenticeships, and we would. That has to happen and a New Democratic government would do it because it's essential for the future of our province.

I want to spend some of the time that is remaining to talk about the environment, because if there is someplace else this government has deinvested in, it is in the environment that eventually all of us depend on.

I am not someone who worships the NAFTA agreement. Conservatives worship the NAFTA agreement. Liberals worship the NAFTA agreement; I know that. In fact, Liberals would like to extend the NAFTA agreement to basically become a hemisphere agreement. It doesn't matter to Liberals that there are no protections for labour standards, no protections for human rights, no protections of the environment. None of those things matter.

But something that did emerge from NAFTA was a study that was done of environmental protection across the various provincial and state jurisdictions of Canada and the United States. Do you know what that study showed, a very recent study, released, I believe, about a month and a half ago? That study showed that Ontario now ranks last in terms of environmental protection. Ontario now ranks last.

We can see this everywhere. This is a government that says: "We'll cut the scientists, the inspectors, the people who do the monitoring. We'll lay them off." You have 750 scientists, monitors, inspectors and technicians who have gone from the Ministry of Environment; 750 people who were directly involved in environmental protection in Ontario are gone. Then it says: "We'll turn it over to the private sector. Corporations can monitor and police themselves." That's what you did in the Ministry of the Environment.

Then you went to the Ministry of Natural Resources, the other body, the other institution in this province that tries to provide a measure of environmental protection and you laid off most of the foresters, the forest technicians, the wildlife biologists, the fisheries biologists and the other scientists who built up a very good bank of knowledge on environmental protection, particularly with respect to the natural environment. You said corporations can police themselves, monitor themselves.

What's happening out there in terms of corporations monitoring themselves? I can tell you what's happening. Yes, there are some companies that have a vision that goes 15 or 20 years down the road, and they say: "Yes, we want to be environmentally responsible. We don't want to have the name of our corporation on the front page of any newspaper identifying us as being a corporate polluter or someone not respectful of the environment." Some companies do that. But other companies look at it and say: "Hey, there's a chance here to make a quick buck. There's a chance here to save money on environmental protection. There's an opportunity here not to invest in the technologies that will ensure that we have clean air, will ensure

that the stuff we put out our sewer pipe is clean. There's a chance to make a quick buck." That's what's happening out there. That's what's happening.

If you go into northern Ontario, you will see forest companies that observe the rules. You'll see other forest companies that simply breach the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, and what does the government say? This government helps them. This government tries to pass regulations that not only permit that but promote it. Then you have companies which not only breach the Crown Forest Sustainability Act but simply wave their hand at the Environmental Assessment Act. They ignore the Environmental Assessment Act in terms of the location of logging roads and logging activity. What does this government say? It helps them.

Then you have issues like Plastimet in Hamilton, where you had an environmental disaster that was covered not just in Ontario but across Canada, across North America and elsewhere in the world. People who live in Hamilton who experienced that want an inquiry to determine what happened, why it happened, who's responsible and how you avoid it in the future. And what's the response of this government and the Ministry of Environment? "No public inquiry. We're not interested in why it happened. We're not interested in how it happened. We're not interested in ensuring that it doesn't happen again. We're not interested in finding out who's responsible." That's the record. I think we know why they don't want the public inquiry: because the public inquiry would very likely show that a principal ingredient in allowing Plastimet to happen is this government, the Harris Conservative government.

I want to be very clear with people from all across the province. What happened in Hamilton at the Plastimet disaster could happen in any community in this province now, any community, because the people who used to be there protecting the environment, the people who used to be there holding mining companies and forest companies and steel companies and chemical companies accountable aren't there any more. The scientists aren't there. The inspectors aren't there. The monitors aren't there. The enforcement people aren't there any more. What happened in Hamilton could happen in any community in this province now, and the level of destruction, the disaster that could result, could be far worse than what happened at Plastimet.

Another example of what's happening on the environmental front: The government had this much-ballyhooed, much-boasted-about program, the clean air program.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Drive Clean.

Mr Hampton: Drive Clean. They were going to do auto emissions testing, and they announced it and they reannounced it. Then they had to admit just a few weeks ago that it's not going to get off the ground.

What people may not know is that the reason it's not going to get off the ground is because the Ministry of Environment in Ontario now no longer has the expertise to put the program together. The knowledgeable, thoughtful, trained people who care about environmental protection are no longer in the Ministry of Environment to put that

program together. They're gone; they're out the door. They were laid off. They were told that in Mike Harris's Ontario, in the Conservative vision of Ontario, they're not important any more.

Wrong decision. Wrong direction. Absolutely the wrong direction. Why? We're going to find out very, very shortly in a number of areas, in a number of aspects of this province, how shortsighted this is.

Pulp and paper companies and lumber companies in northern Ontario within the next five years are going to encounter a situation where their pulp or their paper or their lumber will no longer be welcome in some of the jurisdictions across this world. Those jurisdictions will say: "We are not interested in buying pulp or paper or lumber from a province which is systematically degrading its own environment. We're not interested in buying lumber or pulp and paper from a jurisdiction that is de-investing in environmental protection."

When that happens, we won't be talking about 100 jobs here or 100 jobs there; we'll be talking about tens of thousands of jobs and we'll be talking about the very existence of communities. We're only about four or five years away from that. We're only that far away from another Plastimet disaster in virtually any other community in this province, because there is no one there doing the work.

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It is absolutely essential that this province reinvest in environmental protection. Study after study, from here and from elsewhere, across North America and western Europe, shows that if you don't invest in environmental protection, if you don't put some emphasis on environmental protection, it has, in the medium and longer term, huge impacts on health, huge impacts on the productivity of your population and huge impacts on your economy.

The Industrial Disease Standards Panel — something else that this government has done away with — did world-class work in terms of identifying those compounds, whether they be chemical compounds or those kinds of industrial processes that resulted in serious diseases like cancer and emphysema. It was able to establish the kinds of pathological and epidemiological studies which show the relationship between the use of certain chemicals and the incidence of cancer and other very serious diseases. What has this government done? It has destroyed the panel, killed it, said: "This doesn't matter. This isn't important any more." It shows very clearly the linkages between environmental protection and people's health, and in the longer term we will see the connection between environmental protection and the productivity of our society and the productivity of our economy, that this government doesn't care.

I want to be very clear with people: A New Democrat government would reinvest in environmental protection. We would reinvest in something which is the foundation of a healthy population, a productive population and a productive economy. We recognize that in doing that reinvestment, you don't destroy jobs, you create jobs. Some of the best jobs that are being created in other

jurisdictions are jobs that come out of investments in environmental technology. Firms in Sweden and Finland now market their products in the pulp and paper industry around the world because they are able to put forward products that are among the most sustainable in terms of environmental protection, that have the least disruption of our natural environment, that consume the least amount of energy and that produce a product that can be certified around the world as being environmentally responsible and environmentally sustainable.

That's how you create real jobs. That's how you create jobs that pay good wages, that have a future. But that requires investment, and investment, unfortunately, is something that this government only understands very narrowly. They understand investing in the wealthiest people in this province through a tax scheme, but they don't understand investing in young people through a good education system. They don't understand investing in our college and university students through a college and university system that is well funded.

I mentioned the NAFTA report on environment. I could also point out that in funding of colleges and universities now Ontario ranks last in Canada — last after Newfoundland, last after Prince Edward Island, last after Saskatchewan, last after Quebec. Ontario ranks last in the investments that we're making in the very young people who are going to be the future of our economy and the future of our communities. A very narrow vision of investment: no vision of investment in health care, no vision of investment in the health and the productivity of our population as a whole and no vision of investment in the environment.

I can't close without mentioning the Environmental Commissioner's report of today. That report condemned the government more than ever, condemned the government for being shortsighted, condemned the government for having a very narrow vision, condemned the government for creating across Ontario an atmosphere where more and more the quality of the environment will not be respected and will in fact be degraded. The report frankly condemned the government not just for neglect but condemned the government for being the active force behind much of this, condemned the government for being the active force which promotes degradation of the environment, which promotes the loss in environmental protection.

I want to say very clearly, not just to the Conservative members of the Legislature and the one or two Liberal members who are here from time to time, to all the people across Ontario that a New Democrat government would reinvest in the environment, and we wouldn't wait until the year 2003 and the year 2004 and hope for a surplus as the Liberal Party would. We recognize that only the wealthiest people in this province are benefiting at all from the tax scheme of the Harris government. Those people must now make a reinvestment in health care, in education, in our communities, in environmental protection for the betterment of the whole province. We make that commitment. We would reverse that phoney tax

scheme. We would insist that those people who have benefited from that tax scheme now reinvest in the things that matter most to our communities.

I have to close, but before I do, I want to present my amendment to the throne speech. I want to read it for you and then I will present it. I stand seconded by Mr Wildman, the member for Algoma in presenting this motion.

That the amendment to the motion be amended by adding the following thereto.

This House regrets that the Harris government has taken Ontario in profoundly the wrong direction;

This House regrets that the government has failed to respect the values that have always defined Ontario: cooperation, compassion, competence and community; and

This House regrets that the Harris government has implemented a phoney income tax scheme which, unless it is reversed by the next government of Ontario, will entrench permanently the cuts which are causing hardship for our youngest, our oldest, our sickest and our least fortunate in society.

I present this amendment and I close my comments for now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): The leader of the third party moves the following amendment:

This House regrets that the Harris government has taken Ontario in profoundly the wrong direction;

This House regrets that the government has failed to respect the values that have always defined Ontario: cooperation, compassion, competence and community; and

This House regrets that the Harris government has implemented a phoney income tax scheme which, unless it is reversed by the next government of Ontario, will entrench permanently the cuts which are causing hardship for our youngest, our oldest, our sickest and our least fortunate in society.

Further debate.

Mr Dave Boushy (Sarnia): It's a true pleasure for me to speak on the recent speech from the throne. I don't remember ever hearing a throne speech of any government that so clearly indicated the concerns of Ontario, and my riding's population has been heard and is being acted on. The day after the throne speech signalled our government's intent to continue with our pro-growth, pro-jobs policies to ensure Ontario's success continues to grow into the 21st century, the reaction was swift.

Be ready to invest: That's the message that was sent to at least 25 major industrial leaders that I know of when the throne speech announced that the Ontario government would consider a bill to amend the construction-related labour legislation. Amendments to the labour legislation, combined with coming legislation that will open up the electricity industry to competition, are making Ontario and our community look terrific in the eyes of investors.

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For example, in Sarnia a cogeneration plant is on the horizon which would employ 300 people. As a result, we'll enjoy the increased and sustained prosperity that comes with increased employment and good-paying jobs.

Locally, our skilled construction workers, tradesmen and petrochemical industries stand to benefit by our government's looking at amended labour legislation, particularly as it affects the construction industry. After listening to and working with our local workers, industries and construction associations for about two years in order to promote these legislative measures, I couldn't be happier to see it becoming a reality.

This legislation will without a doubt attract investment and create opportunities in our community. In speaking with various industry officials, I feel I can say with full confidence that we can expect some major new developments in our area, thanks to the coming legislation.

I want to give you a few examples. In my riding of Sarnia, Imperial Oil is seriously considering an expansion worth between \$150 million and \$200 million, and this bill would help make a solid case for this investment. The immediate impact would be the employment of about 300 construction workers.

Bayer executives tell me a project worth more than \$100 million that would employ 200 construction workers over 18 months is on the horizon, but they need this kind of legislation to cement the project.

Again in my riding, Dow Chemical recently announced a \$100-million project that would employ 350 construction workers in 1999 and create 59 permanent jobs. However, with the anticipated labour legislation in place, local Dow executives would have the ammunition they need to convince their head office that building much larger units in Ontario is favourably competitive in North America to such places as Houston, Texas.

Again I would like to refer you to my riding. Nova corporation has a series of projects they are studying which amount to about \$400 million. If we pass this legislation early, that would give us much-needed leverage in making Ontario their best choice.

These initial signs of interest and commitment are only the beginning. By moving to encourage more flexibility in the labour relations system as it applies to the construction industry, we are opening up my community's potential and Ontario's potential as well. The throne speech told my constituents that our government has heard their desires and concerns. Indeed, as our community is strengthened, all of Ontario will benefit.

The importance of our community and its petrochemical industry cannot be overstated. Let me say that Sarnia is Canada's third most active port, and accounts for roughly 8% of the nation's combined imports and exports. Ontario's petrochemical firms represent 62% of employment in the petrochemical industry of Canada, 59% of shipments and 48% of exports. Most of this activity is concentrated in my riding and around the Sarnia complex.

The advantages we have in attracting further development and investment are enormous. We have a highly skilled, educated workforce of true professionals. We have a strategic location in the heart of the rich North American market with easy access to half of the population of Canada and the US within one day of trucking. We are closer to the major petrochemical markets than our

American competition on the US gulf coast. Major pipelines and a strong inter-relation between petrochemicals and refinery units give our local industry flexibility in production.

Yet despite all these factors, even while major investments in the petrochemical sector were taking place elsewhere in North America, few were finding their way to Ontario. Because economies of scale are so important to maintain competitiveness on the global market, there needs to be constant growth in the industry. The stumbling block has been the higher cost of constructing new facilities in Ontario than in our competing jurisdictions of Alberta and Houston.

How did all this happen? Before 1978 about a dozen large general contractors signed special agreements with the construction trade unions. These working agreements meant these contractors would subcontract only to unionized employers. The contractors signed these working agreements with the understanding that they were temporary and would expire at the end of their respective projects. However, in 1978 with the introduction of a province-wide bargaining scheme, these working agreements were set in stone.

It's interesting to note that general contractors did not employ members of the trade directly — they subcontracted to unionized employees — yet they are still limited to unionized trades people. The result is that these contractors, because their construction costs are high, are unable to compete with contractors who are not under similar obligations like, for example, the American contractors. Ontario has been missing out on major projects that would stimulate economic growth in my riding and Ontario.

It was time for us to address this problem. Over the past 18 months we have been listening and consulting with union representatives in the construction industry, contractors and the heads of major industries to find a mutually acceptable solution. All parties have raised the concept of project agreements as a tool to attract investment and create new jobs.

Under this type of agreement, the labour costs of selected major industrial projects would be renegotiated on a one-time basis to make them more competitive with neighbouring jurisdictions. As far as I know, none has been successfully negotiated this way. Because it has to be unanimous, as required, hundreds of local construction workers lost the opportunity of employment and our community lost out on the permanent spinoff effects of new development.

Let me say that our government has listened to all parties during the last two years, has seen investments go to Alberta where Ralph Klein has become actively involved after setting a goal to attract \$11.5 billion of investment by 1999. His decision to end Alberta's machinery and equipment tax played a major role in Nova Corp expanding there.

I think it's evident that our government has a role to play. It's time for us to break the deadlock and find a way to make project agreements workable in my area as well as in Ontario.

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Let me also add that we will continue listening to the concerns of organized labour, potential investors, construction contractors and others to strike a balance that will benefit everyone.

I want to thank the many cabinet ministers who met with interested groups and individuals in Ontario and from my riding, and in particular, I want to thank the previous labour minister and the current minister for all their attention to my riding's local needs.

In response to our unique needs and Ontario's needs, the throne speech had a clear message to our community: "The government is listening to you. We hear you and we are moving forward with care."

At this time, I would like also to urge that while we move forward with care on this initiative, we also move forward with speed to make the future one of promise and hope for generations to come.

I want to go back to the amendment to the framework of the labour legislation. The sooner we consider this legislation the sooner we can bring in new investment which will boost both the local and provincial economy. I want to warn you that major investments and expansions in our petrochemical sector will not only create construction jobs but also that permanent employment in the industries will result and further jobs will follow in a spinoff effect.

Once new plants and expansions are commissioned, permanent benefits to our community in Ontario and others in the province will be created through the need for ongoing purchases of materials and equipment. This is good news not only for my riding but also for all our ridings. As the viability of the Sarnia complex is solidified, it will maintain and enhance its role as the petrochemical centre of Canada, further adding benefit to the provincial economy.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Questions and comments, the member for Kingston and The Islands.

Applause.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and thank you very much too for the applause.

It's very interesting listening to the member for Sarnia. I congratulate him on what's happening in Sarnia. If what he's saying about how the government has listened to all these various people and how they've been able to come to this new conclusion and these new arrangements in Sarnia is really happening there, so much the better.

I only wish the government had listened as much to the other people of Ontario, because it's interesting that the throne speech itself deals to a large extent with mea culpas from Mike Harris in which he's saying, "We'll now start to listen to the people of Ontario." There are an awful lot of people out there in an awful lot of different sectors who feel that they haven't been listened to over the last three years.

Let's talk about the people on welfare. Have they been listened to? No. They've been cut by 22%. Let's talk about the people who suffer from disabilities. Have they

been listened to? No. We still don't have a new act to look at and to contemplate in this House. Let's talk about the OPSEU workers. Were they listened to? No. They had to go on strike. Let's talk about the teachers and the teachers' strike last year. Were they listened to? No. They had to go on strike. You can just go on. The nurses are another group that wasn't listened to at all.

I think if there's one sense the people of Ontario have it's that this government hasn't been listening to the people of Ontario. So if there is something happening in Sarnia that's good for the local economy there, I applaud that. If the government is listening there, I would just ask the member to ask the Premier and the other members of cabinet to start listening to the other people of Ontario as well so that the concerns people have about their health care, about the quality of their education, about the quality of life in their communities will be addressed.

Mr Wildman: I want to congratulate the member for Sarnia on his intervention. I recognize that he is dealing with a particular problem that relates to a border community like Sarnia and that he has consulted with contractors and labour in the community to try and determine a solution for individual contracts to stimulate employment in his community.

I'm a little concerned, though, that in focusing on this one particular issue, which is very important to his community, he has not also dealt with the other effects of the government's program and agenda on the people of Sarnia and the people of the province.

I wonder whether that member, knowing him as I do, really does support the view that pregnant mothers who find themselves on social assistance should not receive the \$37 supplement to enable them to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables that will enable them during their pregnancy to ensure that they are healthy, that the foetus is healthy and that the baby will have a good head start. I wonder if he supports the view expressed by his leader that the reason this \$37 should be cut was because these women might irresponsibly spend the money on beer. I wonder if he respects that kind of comment from the Premier of the province and whether he believes that in any way enhances his office, or does it demean all of us as citizens of Ontario?

I note that his colleague from Wellington has a resolution that is going to be debated tomorrow that talks about a head start for babies and for young children. It would seem to me that we need the same kind of head start for foetuses.

The Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired. Further questions and comments?

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): It certainly is a pleasure for me to rise in the House today to comment on the speech of my colleague from Sarnia with regard to the economy and the petrochemical industry in the Sarnia area.

First of all, let me assure you that I am also very concerned with what is happening in the area. I have been a member of the Sarnia Lambton Council for Economic Renewal for the past six years. The Sarnia area has

experienced a very high unemployment rate for the past six or seven years. We have also lost 6,000 highly paid jobs in the past eight years due to restructuring, downsizing and plant closure. That is the reality of what is happening in the Sarnia-Lambton area.

Consequently, in the past number of years I have personally met with leaders from the union sector, leaders from the corporate sector, in order to arrive at a solution to the problem that we are experiencing. There is no doubt that no one group, no one corporation, should have a monopoly when it comes to the construction industry. Basically, what we are trying to achieve in the Sarnia area is to have the corporations, the construction industry and the unions all work together in order to provide proper employment, meaningful employment, to the people in the Sarnia-Lambton area.

I am sure that whether you're a pipefitter, electrician or teacher, you are entitled to make a decent wage, a decent living. However, what has happened in the past six years in the Sarnia area, because of the existing union contracts, is that people have not had the opportunity to make a decent living. My only interest is to make sure the people — my constituents and Mr Boushy's constituents — do have an opportunity to provide a bright future not only for themselves but for their kids.

The Deputy Speaker: Further questions and comments?

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): Of course we're moved by the honourable member for Sarnia's statement and plea for understanding about his area, but we are dealing with the Mike Harris government, and the lack of listening to local concerns is a signature of this government. There's absolutely no way in which either Mr Boushy or the member for Lambton can expect to hear from this government in terms of really understanding some of those localized concerns. We need go no further than Charlotte Eleanor Englehart Hospital, which has been stripped down to a bare facility by the lack of a real rural health policy on the part of this government. It's a shame.

It's a shame that perhaps some of the good intentions of some of the other people in this House haven't been followed through, that the actual restructuring commission — sort of like a dog off a leash — set by this government has gone around the province and used the same formulas on large and small communities, the same formulas on each and every one. That's why it's coming back to us now about clogged emergency wards, about communities upset about doctors finding it difficult to stay in communities, because this government can't make that local adjustment, can't understand that there are differences in communities that have to be respected and have to be appreciated.

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I sympathize very greatly with the member for Sarnia, because it certainly is manifest that this government isn't able to do those kinds of adjustments, to make those kinds of nuances in any of their policies. We understand too that while what he deplores that what's happening in the

construction industry probably isn't good to have happening there, that's exactly the example Mike Harris sets in terms of hospitals and school boards, that bigger is better. Somehow we have a government — strangely, for a Conservative government — running like the Soviet Politburo, having unelected commissions out there, assembling larger and larger blocs of government, having large school boards, large municipalities and large hospitals. Of course, in those kinds of outlooks the local community does miss out, does lose out.

My sympathies go to the member opposite and wish him well with his quest for an attentive ear from this government.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Sarnia has two minutes to respond.

Mr Boushy: I'd just like to say thank you to the members on the opposite side for being kind and replying to my speech. I'd also like to thank my colleague from Lambton.

I just want to say that in our area, as well as in Ontario, we have seen the petrochemical industry suffer. We have seen jobs go, for example, to Houston, Texas, and we have seen them go to Alberta because of the high construction costs in our area as well as in Ontario.

In wrapping up my comments, I'd just like to say that this has been going on for many, many years and, as a result, the unemployment rate in our area had gone up to something like 20% at one time when we first got elected. Now it's a little better, and we're trying to improve the situation by encouraging more jobs, opportunity and growth in Ontario. This is just the step in the right direction.

I know that the biggest support I have in regard to this amendment comes from the Liberal Party. To the members from my area, I hope your party will be able to support the amendment. Otherwise, if you do not support this amendment, I'm going to go back and tell them you voted against it.

In conclusion, I want to thank everyone for their support.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Kennedy: It is a great pleasure to be able to follow our leader, Dalton McGuinty, in responding to the throne speech from the government. It is a very important time to take note of where this government stands.

There is the government's effort that came last week to try and put some kind of face on what their government is. We all know and have anticipated for weeks now — there have been leaks from the party apparatus that runs the government, talking about trying to be nicer to women and to seniors, for example. The communication strategy went out to all government departments and said: "You should follow this. You should make sure that whatever you do, you say things that are kind and acceptable to women and seniors." Then, of course, the Premier himself got involved in a dispute with the Dionne sisters and probably put paid to that particular strategy.

But we understand that this government is anxious for people to understand them as real people, as part of this

province, and to understand perhaps the character of this particular government. There is no question now that not only the stumbling around with the words and the names shows that that wasn't a true effort, that what we heard last week was not really the government that occupies the seats opposite today or that has been making those point-and-shoot-from-Toronto decisions over the last three years. Instead, what we're trying to cover up with fine words like "courage" — that really doesn't do the job. It doesn't cover up the essential characteristics of this government, which are, yes, a certain narrowness of outlook, a certain lack of understanding and appreciation, but also a level of incompetence that I think is starting to hang over this government like some badly looked after municipal garbage dump.

We really have a comic book revolution taking place in this province, one where the plans haven't been worked out. We can apply that to almost any area. This week it would be hard for anyone in the province to keep up with the levels of objective opinion that are now being directed at this government and its lack of accomplishment in important areas like child protection. My colleague Sandra Pupatello stood here today with a pile of reports that have been ignored by this government, that can't be acted on by a government that doesn't want to take up a pretty essential basic responsibility of those who would purport to govern Ontario, to mind the wellbeing of those who can't look after themselves. Instead we have had cuts and ignoring the advice of people like the children's advocate who have really put all of us, as elected officials, on the spot to try and make sure that our systems are in place there to protect people. Yet for month after month we have only had obfuscation and delay, so there, for the people of Ontario, in that lack of action is revealed some of the essential character of this government.

It doesn't take in fact the courage that this government tried to parade in front of us as they gave us a look at some of the better elements of Ontario, some of the Olympians and the Special Olympians and the people who do make this province a truly great province. I understand rather well why Mike Harris would aspire to represent some of that character of this province. The difficulty Mike Harris has is that he doesn't get it. He doesn't appreciate that there are aspects of this province that need to be reflected in any government, and those aspects include a level of tolerance, a level of compassion and a level of ability to get the job done that don't seem to exist in this particular government.

When we look at what Mike Harris has brought us over the last two and a half years, we all understand what it means for the average person out there: a higher, not lower, level of anxiety; less certainty, more insecurity about where their jobs might be coming from; whether, as the throne speech tried to propose, there will be good jobs for all. Will there actually be jobs that will meet the new economy? There can't be in the sense there is no deliberate effort on the part of this government — except some touching belief in a voodoo, in a tax cut taking place that's going to generate jobs.

We know that whatever jobs have been developed have come out of our macroeconomy, and what should be focused on by this government, if they want to show us some of those qualities that most Ontarians uphold and want to see reflected in their government, is, for example, taking charge of the training programs, signing those agreements with the federal government and getting down to the job of making sure that Ontarians are prepared. Instead we sit last, not only last in Canada but last out of 42 US jurisdictions, for spending in our universities. That's not preparing people to take on the jobs of the future. That's not making sure that there are good jobs for all.

We know also that when this government talks about high-quality services, they don't mean the same high-quality services that the people in Ontario and indeed the people of Canada have become used to; that instead there is some form of Harris discount being applied to services and it means cheaper is always going to be better, bigger is going to be better and the more of our public services we can make available to private companies the better off we'll be. That's the signature of this government. And you know what? The unfortunate thing about those insights is that the government won't even pause to see if the job is getting done well.

One of the things that happened last year when this government deregulated some industries is they didn't pause long enough. They claimed they were saving money by making elevating devices a self-inspected and self-regulated industry and dealing with amusement devices on the same basis. What did we learn, though, by looking a little closer than this government was prepared to? The government gave away \$9 million in fees, gave away a profit centre for what the government was doing simply because in the Comic Book Revolution there are lots of objectives, lots of questions but no real answers. That's what we're finding today in the whole range, the whole panoply of things that have been attempted by this government.

We can talk about workfare, and people need to understand that the people who are on welfare want to be doing something, but this government simply can't deliver. If you scratch the surface and look at what's actually happening around the province, you find dozens, perhaps hundreds, of people in actual workfare opportunities. Instead, what people are occupied doing with this government, because of its laziness, its inability to really focus on the problem, they have decided to take the old programs that were happening before, where people looked for work and may have been given help with a résumé and they have claimed those as their own.

There's a real not just intellectual but fundamental laziness on the part of a government that can't do what even regressive governments in the States at least have had the gumption to do, which is to take the savings they have made off the backs of children, off the plates that people have had to eat from in terms of the food that's missing and used that to help people go back to work. It's

not happening in Ontario in 1998 and it hasn't happened for the past couple of years.

That's why when we see words like "courage" in the throne speech, we know it took no courage on the part of this government for the initiatives it has put in place, that it has taken on, with courage and tenacity, the weakest people in this province and given them a whopping, no doubt, is the feeling on the opposite benches, that they have been able to take on the children who sit on welfare, through no fault of their own, the families who have lost jobs or come from broken marriages or have encountered a disability or a sickness. Even as we speak, this month this proud government would review the cases of all the people on disability and start kicking them off, the way they already have many of the people who just draw down drug benefits. That's the character of the Mike Harris government, which fine words simply can't hide.

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We look at the essential message that this government can't get away from. In the throne speech we heard on the one hand that this is a government that might now deign to listen. Now that it has done the things it considers important, it might actually listen to the people of this province. The people of the province know where to put that particular message because they know what it's worth. They understand that the government couldn't later on in its speech stay away from bashing people on welfare, from talking about people on welfare as not wanting to work, a fundamental mistruth used by this government and reused by members in this House to put a certain group of people in this province in disrespect and disrepute. The members of this government should stand up and account for that, account for picking on a group of people who happen to find themselves in one of the most vulnerable states in their lives. But unfortunately that's not a characteristic of this government.

Had there been a Mike Harris who could match the character of this province, he would have said a number of things. He would have said, "I'm sorry." He would have said: "I've made mistakes with your health care. I've bobbled it, I've botched it, I've put people in the hallways and I'm going to fix it." But that's not what Mike Harris said. There's nowhere that it's more apparent that the essential message of Mike Harris is principally about self-interest.

What Mike Harris doesn't get is that even the people who most depend upon themselves, who have the largest measure of independence, appreciate that their ability to get along in Ontario depends on how their neighbours are doing, on how their community is doing. The essential Mike Harris message couched in that throne speech is: "You just worry about yourself. We'll give you a tax cut, we'll give you somebody to blame and you don't worry about what happens in terms of those people who are deprived of their education because we deregulated tuition, those people who don't fit in because they happen to get sick while we're taking money out of hospitals, those people who now would go to junior kindergarten but

can't because we've decided that an early start for young children isn't important enough."

In the area of health care, that competition for self-interest is never more apparent than it is today. We have from this government an offer today of a discount in the standards of health care in this province. You'll be tempted with that. This government will say: "It's cheaper to be able to provide health care on the sly here. We take it out of the Public Hospitals Act, out of the Canada Health Act. No longer will you be protected. We will put the beds we used to provide for the sickest, most vulnerable people in this province, the people in chronic care" — 3,506 vulnerable people will now head for long-term-care facilities which don't have those protections and it will happen in virtually every community across this province. Will any member of the government stand up and speak for those people who can't speak for themselves, who are going to be given the Harris discount in terms of health care? We'll find out by the end of this debate.

The rest of us are being told implicitly that we don't need to be concerned, we don't need to worry, there'll be beds eight years from now. At the time when we get older there might be some beds there, but when we think about our parents and grandparents, we aren't going to have the same standards for them. We're being asked to narrow our vision to look after just ourselves and our families. "Don't let those other needs in. Step over those homeless people, take an American-style view of things, and at the end of the day, when it comes to health care, buy your own care, go to self-insurance, go to the kind of thing that some of the people opposite are nodding their heads at." It's the kind of thing the Fraser Institute and this Reform-Tory, Progressive Conservative Party believes in, which is giving us such a low value in terms of the care we receive in our hospitals and our doctors' offices that we'll be forced through the back door to end up in the same position as our neighbours to the south: with some people who can really afford it with the best care imaginable, and the rest of us with care that we can barely scrape by with.

We know that in this country people live longer, they participate more fully in society, they're able to contribute more back, they get well sooner because we've got a public health care system, because we recognize an essential fact that eludes Mike Harris and the members of this government: that the character of Ontario is built partly upon a decision made a long time ago that when you get sick, when you're most vulnerable, when you're least likely to be able to earn the income you need for good health care, we're going to make sure it's there for you. It isn't going to depend on your wellbeing or your inheritance or the people you know or the things you can do for yourself to be able to get that care. Unfortunately, in the throne speech and in subsequent days and in the announcement made today, Mike Harris has refused to stand up and defend that principle.

We look at what was contained in the announcement today and we learn that there's a bias built in for for-profit care. We're not just going to lose the chronic care

hospitals that are being closed — fine facilities like Runnymede, which provides absolutely excellent care, in what is admittedly an older building, but excellent care to 100 patients, one of whom is Gladys, who I mentioned today — but those patients are going to be forced to move if this government has its way. But this government will not go to a blended approach that would allow those patients to spend their last days in the place they've learned to call home. Instead, we have a government blundering its way through this health care restructuring and telling us that things will be fine.

We have an announcement today where figures have been piled and piled to make a big number, and what does it add up to? Less increased spending than has happened under any government, except for this one, in the last 10 years in terms of health care — \$150 million perhaps, possibly, maybe, each year so that eight years from now we might have the number of beds we need to meet the waiting lists that exist today. That's Mike Harris's planning and caring for people. Again, that's with a reminder that almost 4,000 of those beds are discount beds for people who are getting good care in chronic care facilities today.

It hardly becomes this government. It's what we've come to expect from them. We've come to expect a certain amount of overdependence on public relations and communications. But when it comes to remembering the people who put them here, the people who voted for them, the people out there who, despite having not voted for them, expect to be represented in the decisions of this government, there's that glaring omission. The patients aren't covered off; they're conveniently left out of the picture.

Earlier today, the Minister of Health for this government, when challenged, requested, asked to provide some level of guarantee to those patients, wouldn't do so, because this government doesn't intend to provide that level of quality of care to those mainly older but also in some cases younger people with traumatic injuries or degenerative diseases who aren't going to be cured but who deserve the respect and the support of the helpful services they're getting today.

This government compounded its efforts to discount health care in this province a few weeks ago when it sat in private session with the doctors of this province. All across this province the people of Ontario are going to walk into doctors' offices and receive surprises as they find out that Mike Harris has traded off \$170 million worth of doctors' services, health services that used to be provided, and has now made them inaccessible and services they have to pay for out of their own pockets.

What's one of those services? Visits to long-term-care facilities. Doctors are restricted in the number of times they can be reimbursed for visiting people in those same facilities which now this government says that over a period of time they want to expand and make a principal delivery system for health care.

Those are the kinds of things the public of Ontario has to take into account when they evaluate this throne speech,

when they evaluate this government and this Premier's efforts to try and be seen in a different light.

Is this really Mike Harris's last-minute conversion to community care? Does he really believe what people have talked about for years, that there can be better care provided in the community? If he did, he would have funded it by now.

What is the track record of the Mike Harris government when it comes to community care? In 1996-97 this government got up and with great fanfare and to the raucous applause of the back bench said, "We're going to put \$170 million into community care," more money than has actually been announced today on an annual basis. What actually happened? What did Mike Harris actually do? Mike Harris didn't put a dime, in the whole entire year, into community care. In fact, at the end of the year the public accounts of the province of Ontario show that \$5 million less than had been spent the year before was actually spent by this government.

What we've seen even in this last year, the second year of trying to fulfil that last promise, which was actually an initiative of the previous government to try and catch up some of the needs in this province — we still understand that at least \$30 million has not been spent, even though in places like Hamilton and Ottawa and the Niagara region, people have been turned away and cut off home care. We've actually had 78-year-old spouses told that they should be providing more than the 22 hours of care they're providing, and lose the two-hour respite care they have, for their 77-year-old wife. That's the kind of approach that really tells us the true character of the Mike Harris government: that inability, that unwillingness to really take full responsibility for the people of this province, to not actually factor them in when they're making decisions.

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We know that what's being played out in Ontario today has a pretty simple root. It's rooted in this appeal to self-interest, putting money in your pocket ahead of all things, ahead of what you might like for your children in terms of school or for other people's children, which is usually how the appeal is made. In terms of what's happening in health care, there's usually an effort to blame somebody; to blame doctors, to blame nurses, to blame the people who go to emergency, even if they're lying on a cot.

Even in emergency, if you remember the first response that came from this government when we raised it last February — not the most recent February, but a year ago, in 1997. We talked about Ed Whitehill in Peterborough. We asked this government to stand accountable for this 82-year-old man who went to the hospital for the first time in 40 years and whose family was not allowed to stay with him and whose daughter found him with 23 other people in the emergency room hallway and had to express, in a way that everyone in the hallway heard, "How long has my father been lying here dead?" Ed Whitehill died in Peterborough in February 1997 because this government would not acknowledge an emergency room crisis.

Subsequently, when this government was called upon to account, the former health minister quite typically tried to

blame this on the staff, in fact went publicly on the record in a committee and said that the people of Peterborough, the nurses and the doctors, had done this as a public relations stunt, to the everlasting shame of this government. That stain has not gone away.

A year later, when the emergency crisis was too big to be ignored, when Mike Harris himself finally had to go to an emergency ward and was put upon by the doctors and by the head of the hospital, where they pinned him against the wall after they gave him his X-ray and said, "You've got to understand there's a problem here," only then did we even get a glimmer of recognition.

We came out with a four-point plan and we said to this government, "Fix this." It wouldn't. Instead this government keeps ignoring the problems, keeps ignoring the people of Ontario and keeps showing us what can't be hidden in the throne speech: It's real character is that of a one-term, miserly government.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I'm happy to have an opportunity to comment on the speech by the member for York South. He points out many of the flaws. As a fellow health critic, obviously we're very focused on the whole issue of health care, particularly with the efforts we've seen today of this government to try to paper over the very serious cracks they have caused to appear in our health care system.

The member talked about some of the mythology around the self-congratulations of this government. He mentioned some of the ways in which this government has tried to give an impression that in fact cannot be shown to have the effect they claim, when you look at what is happening to people within real communities.

He talked about some of the underspending that has happened. What he didn't mention, and what I worry about a great deal, is some of the elements that were greatly ballyhooed as helping to take away from some of the way in which this government pandered to physicians at the same time as they were releasing 15,000 nurses from service.

One of the major ones was a funding mechanism to help underserved areas to attract a sufficient number of doctors to provide 24-hour, seven-day-a-week primary care to their citizens, \$36.4 million that was part of that agreement, part of the agreement signed with the OMA, the agreement that allowed doctors to charge over their cap without being clawed back. What did the government do to help those underserved communities, which happen not just in the north? They didn't spend the money. They put it back into the pot. We'll see whether they get it out the door this year or whether people continue to be underserved across the province.

The Deputy Speaker: Further questions and comments?

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): My comments are to the member for York South. His entire speech is quite negative with respect to the operation of our government. I suppose he feels that obligation as a member of the opposition, and his obligation is to criticize and to perhaps

put forward an alternative. I didn't hear too many alternatives as to how he proposes to solve some of the problems that our province has. I haven't heard any alternatives put forward by his leader, Mr McGuinty, as to how he proposes to solve some of the problems our province has.

Interjection: Or pay for them.

Mr Tilson: Or pay for them. The NDP wants to raise taxes by 30%. Most of his speech was dealt with a negative attitude that has not the positive reflection of what's coming about in our province. I don't know whom he's speaking to. The entire throne speech, the comments from members of the public, at least the public I speak to — maybe he speaks to a different public. I'm sure he does.

Just a few statistics for my friend to comment on in his response: The Conference Board of Canada says that consumer confidence is at its highest level in almost nine years. Department store sales for 1997 recorded the highest yearly increase on record; new car sales are up 17.5% in units and 22.9% in dollars the first 10 months of 1997; housing starts are up 29% in the same period. The conference board projects in 1997 a GDP growth of 4.3% for Ontario, the strongest in the country, and says Ontario's economy will continue to outpace the national average until at least 2001.

That doesn't sound like the terrible province my friend is creating in his comments, nor in any of the other comments of the two leaders of the respective opposition parties, as to where our province is going. People think quite the contrary.

Mr Gerretsen: What the member for Dufferin-Peel didn't talk about was the fact that the number one concern the people of Ontario have from their government is for good, high-quality health care. That remains the number one issue and it's got nothing to do with consumer confidence. It's got to do with the services that people want.

Let's just talk about what Mike Harris talked about to the Rotary Club on May 26, just about nine days before the last election. Let's just deal with the three promises he made at that time and has made many times before that. What did he say about health care? He said he wasn't going to cut one penny out of health care. What, instead, has he done? He's already taken \$800 million out and another \$500 million is pending. There's a broken promise. What about the second issue dealing with hospital closures, what he said to Robert Fisher on Global TV? He said, "Certainly I can guarantee you, Robert, that it's not my plan to close hospitals." What did he do? To date he has closed 32 hospitals in this province, including the Hotel Dieu Hospital in the city of Kingston, which many of my constituents are very concerned about, it being the only hospital located right in downtown Kingston, which will no longer be there and which in effect has been giving care to the people of Kingston, Ontario, for the last 153 years.

Let's talk about another promise that Mike Harris made. He said, "Under my plan there will be no new user fees when it comes to health care." Let's take a look at the

record and what he's done over the last two to three years: \$225 million in new user fees for seniors and the poor has been initiated under the drug benefit plan.

There are three promises that Mike Harris hasn't kept, and the people of Ontario know that.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I want to reinforce some of the information the member for York South provided today, particularly around this government's ability to announce money and then its inability to get it out the door.

If the government thinks that people believed the Minister of Health when she stood in her place today and talked about all the money that's going out for long-term care, they should think again. Last year this government spent \$5 million less than the year before on long-term care even though the government announced an additional amount of \$170 million to be spent.

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Let me give you an example from our part of the world. This government announced last year, as part of the negotiations with the OMA, that it would spend \$36.4 million to recruit and retain physicians and specialists in northern Ontario. Four communities in my riding are on that underserved area list: the town of Capreol, the city of Valley East, the town of Nickel Centre, and Sudbury District East, which make up four small communities in the east part of the riding. Those communities desperately need physicians. This government did not get one penny of the \$36.4 million allocated for recruitment and retention of physicians into northern Ontario out the door. Not a single one of those four communities has benefited from an announcement made by this government in 1996.

On the flip side, we have young people who want to come back to northern Ontario. I give you the example of Lyne Giroux, whose family contacted me last week. She's a third year medical student dealing in French. She wants to go into the dermatology program in Ottawa. She went to the regional municipality and asked for funding. They said, "We can probably get money for you from this \$36.4 million that the government is going to be spending," or the \$1 million that was supposed to be reinvested from the health commission back into our community. She can't get any money to continue her studies to go into the dermatology program because this government can't get that money out the door.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for York South, you can sum up.

Mr Kennedy: I want to thank the members for Kingston and The Islands and Sudbury East for illuminating and adding to my remarks, and also most particularly the member for Dufferin-Peel. It is very, very heartening to see, from a political perspective, that the members opposite sit firmly with their blinders fixed, unable to see the challenges of this province to help it reach its potential. It's those blinders that are going to make sure this is a one-term government, a government that cannot come to terms with the impacts of what they are doing, of making change and hurting people along the way, that can't stand accountable for that.

I recommend to the member for Dufferin-Peel, should he wish to change that outcome, that he might become one of the members of the back bench or one of the members of this party as a whole, of this government, who can actually speak for some of those people who are being left out of Mike Harris's Ontario, because their number is growing every day. Whether it's people in chronic care beds today or people who are looking for jobs at universities or people trying to get into universities, there needs to be room for them.

I detected even in the harshness of his remarks, which I understand, some level of openness. I hold out that hope for this government as a whole. We would like to see the path they're taking Ontario on mitigated so that people like Lennie Garcia, who was admitted to Queensway hospital last April 19 and waited 10 hours to be assessed with appendicitis, waited another nine and half hours to receive her operation and then had her appendix burst in the operating room — she sends a message to Mike Harris: "Thanks, Mike, for helping me die faster. Because of your closures and cuts many poor people like me are dying. You are playing God, because of you and your cabinet are choosing between the rich and the poor." Perhaps not completely elegant, but extremely appropriate. If the member opposite would listen to more of the Lennie Garcias as well as the people he does take calls from, this province would be a better place today, the throne speech would be substantially different, and health care and the other essential services would be in much better shape.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): You would think, given the length of time that the Legislature had been adjourned after December and up until the time that we heard the throne speech of the government, that we would have seen more of people's great expectations met in that throne speech. For months and months we've heard of many of the things that the government had to do, the tough decisions they had to make, the tough things they had to do with respect to education, for example, and the problems that caused, and the downloading of services on to municipalities and the problems that has caused. I can tell you that in the city of Windsor they still haven't been able to do their budget yet because they still don't have the figures they need from this government in order to put their budget together.

The government wanted to get those things out of the way, and unfortunately they couldn't wait forever. We heard so many things about how this was going to be a kinder, gentler government and a kinder, gentler Mike Harris, and he was going to listen to the people more. Quite frankly, when I heard the speech from the throne, even though I heard those words — that they were listening, that they had heard what people had to say and that they were going to slow down — I was somewhat disappointed. The big expectations that I had with respect to what this government was going to announce, I just didn't have met.

I expected that this government was going to have a great deal to say about health care in the province of

Ontario, because I know that in my own constituency office, and I'm sure my colleagues hear the same thing, I hear many complaints from constituents about the quality of health care in my community.

I hear from persons who go to the emergency room at Hotel Dieu or Windsor regional hospital and have to wait there for hours to try and get service in the emergency ward. They tell me that the reason they have to wait is that there are no beds for them in the hospital. If they do get in, they end up in a corridor some place in the hospital. They don't get seen by nurses; they don't get seen by doctors. The reason they can't get admitted into the hospital is they don't have the beds there. The beds are being occupied by persons who should be in long-term-care beds. We all acknowledge that. It was good to see that the government at least acknowledged that there was a shortage of long-term-care beds, not only in Windsor but in other places as well.

We know that much of the funding that's gone in from this government towards health care, even though they like to say that health care was adequately funded when they took over government and that they haven't decreased health care funding, it's hard to find anybody out there who would actually believe that to be the case. However, that's the line this government likes to use. But we know people aren't seeing the services because a lot of that health care funding is going towards closing hospitals and paying the severance pay for nurses and other people who have been the primary deliverers of health care services. It hasn't been going towards providing things like long-term care in our communities. That's why there is such a shortage of long-term-care beds.

The announcement today with respect to what this government is going to invest in long-term care is really a rehashing of some other announcements, announcements that have been made by the health restructuring commission — I think I've got that right; we like to call it the hospital closing commission — which has acknowledged there's a shortage of long-term-care beds in a number of communities in Ontario. To make the numbers look big, this announcement about the number of long-term-care beds that are going to be created projects what is going to be invested over an eight-year period. This is not going to satisfy the demands in our communities for long-term-care beds.

Last year, in the throne speech, it said they announced \$100 million in new funding for long-term-care facilities. I suspect, based on the history of this government and the way they make announcements here, probably some of that \$100 million was in the announcement that was made today. It'll be lucky if we see the investment this government has promised finally delivered in our communities.

Although we'd love to see more long-term-care beds in the Windsor community — that's something that's been acknowledged by the hospital restructuring commission — we have a beautiful facility in our community now. It's called the Malden Park Continuing Care Centre.

As a result of the announcements and the changes this government has made, that facility that was paid for by

fund-raising in our community to the amount of about \$10 million is probably going to be faced with closure. They expect those beds are going to be closed and will be moved to another hospital. We're in danger of losing the Malden Park long-term-care facility unless its designated as a chronic care hospital, which this government has already said they're not going to do.

Even though we have a facility that we could be using for a long-term-care facility, this government says, "It's not adequate; you need to rebuild it someplace else." That's where part of that money is going to go, to build another facility that we don't need and be faced with the closure of a beautiful facility in our community, which I suspect as a result of the decrease in funding by this government will probably end up being sold to the private sector.

1750

That's the other part of what I see through the announcement that was made today about long-term care. That is, this is really privatization through the back door. We know that long-term care isn't covered under the Canada Health Act. Therefore, if you move people out of hospitals where they're in acute-care beds, where they are covered by the Canada Health Act, and into long-term-care beds that aren't covered, then you can privatize those types of services to more patients. Get them out of the hospital, get them into the long-term-care service and then sell that to the private sector so they can benefit from the public investment in long-term health care in the province of Ontario.

That's wrong. We disagree with that. We don't believe this is the direction to go. We're not like our Liberal colleagues, who say, "This government is just moving too far too fast." We say when it comes to things like the privatization of health care, this is just the wrong direction. It's not the direction that we would go and it's one we fundamentally disagree with.

In the city of Windsor we were involved in the restructuring of our health care system long before this government got elected and felt obliged to send the hospital restructuring commission in to undo a lot of the work we had done in our community already. As a matter of fact, a lot of work was done and we came up with this Win-Win report. It was the plan for total health system reconfiguration in the Windsor and Essex county area. That was a plan where we voluntarily agreed to close one hospital, the Grace Hospital in Windsor, so we didn't have to have the hospital closing commission come in and tell us that we needed to close a hospital. A part of that plan also meant that the Malden Park hospital would continue to exist and provide long-term-care services to people who needed them in our community.

Now what we have is a community care access centre in our community, something else I'm getting complaints about in my office, and another area where we can see the move towards privatization, an agenda which this government seems to strongly agree with.

Last week someone came into my office with a letter from the community care access centre. It was addressed to his wife. It said: "The services that you have been provided for the last 12 years, we're not going to be providing them to you any more. Here are some places where now you can get those services." It lists the social services department, private health care providers and a number of other places. Of course, they could always go out and purchase those services themselves; that's always an option that's available.

Hopefully this family is one that would be able to afford to purchase those services elsewhere, but I'm sure there are a great number of people, not only in Windsor but in other places, who are being threatened with the cutting off of their services by the community care access centre — because we know those centres are being underfunded — who will have no options. They won't be able to go out to the private sector and purchase those, and they will be left without those services that they've been able to rely on for years and years. We think that's the wrong direction to go as well.

Maybe one of the reasons that the CCACs were set up was for the purposes of cutting people off some of those services that have been provided in the past, to insulate that level of accountability that previously was there for the government. Now they have the CCACs making these decisions. They send out these letters saying, "Because of funding constraints, we're no longer able to provide these services." Who are people going to complain to? They complain to me; they can complain to the CCACs. The CCACs just say, "We're not getting the funding from the government," and that's basically the end of the story.

That's not the way the health care system should operate here. We shouldn't be setting up organizations in the community for the sole purpose of preventing people from being able to complain directly to a government that should be accountable for this underfunding and the decisions they make.

I see, Speaker, you looking at the clock, and I see that it is about 6 of the clock, so if you would like me to break at this point, I'd be happy to do so.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:30 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1759.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Mercredi 29 avril 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 29 April 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 29 avril 1998

The House met at 1830.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I believe we don't have a quorum.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Clerk, could you check and see if there's a quorum?

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the adjourned debate on the amendment to the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Member for Windsor-Riverside.

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): Before I broke, I was talking about the impact of the community care access centres on the delivery of health care services to people in my riding, and during the break, I had an opportunity to get a copy of the letter that had been received by Ron Dupuis who lives in my riding. It's from the CCAC and it says:

"Dear Client:

"We have completed a comprehensive review of our policy regarding the provision of medical supplies/equipment to our clients." As a result, "Based on this review, it has been decided that the Windsor-Essex Community Care Access Centre will provide the following for one month only."

The bottom line is, "I am sure you can appreciate that this was a difficult decision; however, given the significant pressure to maintain quality health care in our community during this period of financial restraint, we felt that this action was necessary."

This was a letter that said that the services that had been traditionally provided to Mrs Dupuis were no longer going to be provided and it lists places where she can be provided those services. They are the following: social services, veterans affairs, the assistive devices program and private insurance, for example, someone who would have their extended health benefit package.

In response to receipt of that letter, Mr Dupuis was quite upset, as you might expect, and he wrote a letter to Mr Harris and provided me with a copy. It says:

"Mr Harris,

"It is with much concern that I write to you on behalf of my wife and myself.

"Rita has had multiple sclerosis for the past 23 years and has gone through many stages that have robbed her of her independence. Presently, she is confined to a wheelchair, is fully catheterized and must have bowel treatment every other day. This treatment has been provided for the past 12 years by the VON. The supplies needed...have been supplied by CCAC.

"This past week, we received a letter from the...CCAC stating that they would no longer be supplying her with the materials necessary to maintain good and effective bladder assistance, effective June 1, 1998. This is a staggering announcement. When asked about the changes, Rita's case worker explained that it was due to provincial cutbacks. If we were to have to pay for these materials, I have determined that it would cost us \$134.14 each and every month. This is frightening because I am retired and on a fixed income and Rita receives no disability pension from any level of government. This is a classic example of how the downloading of your government is affecting the lives of people adversely. It is bad enough being stricken with a disease without having to fear the results of being unable to afford the cost of most necessary materials....

"Isn't home care designed to keep people at home? If we can't afford the supplies, we face the option of placing her in a long-term-care facility at greatly increased cost to the...system."

This is a perfect example of how the Tories have affected long-term care so far for people in my constituency. Someone who has received services for 12 years is now being faced with being cut off completely from those services and having to purchase them from a private supplier or looking to a private insurance company to provide them.

The throne speech also referred to the environment and the commitment of this government to the environment, and I just want to refer to that commitment. It says, "Understanding the role that a clean environment plays in attracting jobs and investment, your government is determined to improve our air and water quality through initiatives such as Drive Clean."

That's it. That's the sum total of this government's commitment to environmental protection in the throne speech. It's shameful. It's completely inadequate. Even the

program that they mention, Drive Clean, is one that they announced last year with a great deal of fanfare and have announced so far that they're going to be delaying the implementation of until some time in the future.

The delay in that program was the subject, as I know you're aware, Speaker, of comment by the Environmental Commissioner in her report. Among other things, the Environmental Commissioner states in her report, "Overall, environmental health concerns continue to be a very low priority for the ministers of this province." That really is what this government's commitment is towards the environment. It's no surprise, given that scathing criticism by the Environmental Commissioner, that the only attention paid to the environment in the throne speech was a couple of very short lines.

We know that lack of commitment to the environment is going to have a great impact on the people who live in the Windsor community, because what that means is that air quality is going to continue to deteriorate. We are subject to a great deal of transboundary air pollution in our area. A lot of it comes from the United States. In order for us to try to say to the United States that they should make their air quality standards stricter, we need to go there with clean hands and say: "This is what we're doing to try to clean up air quality in Ontario. You should try to match the standards we've imposed."

But the Environmental Commissioner is critical of that, and says that really the bargaining position of Ontario in asking Americans to do that is very weak. She says that because what we have here in Ontario are not strict guidelines like they have in the United States, but are really unenforceable guidelines. We are never going to get anywhere trying to ask American jurisdictions to increase environmental protection with respect to air quality as long as we take the approach that we should have voluntary guidelines to reduce emissions and that we should have programs like Drive Clean that are delayed indefinitely. It's something that's going to lead to increased deaths in our community as well as other communities, and that's unacceptable.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): I just want to make a couple of comments on the 20 minutes the member for Windsor-Riverside has stood criticizing pretty well everything our government is doing.

He talked about the wait in Windsor for emergency room care. I just finished reading an article by a doctor who works in the emergency rooms in Windsor, who talked about the fact that one of the problems in emergency care is the number of people who present themselves at emergency with colds and sore throats, who should be seeking access to the health care system through other means. But I'm sure the member also understands that the Minister of Health just announced \$3.3 million in new funding for emergency room services in Windsor and Essex county. I'm sure he just neglected to mention that in his conversation.

He also talked about the community care access centre system and how that was a failure. I should remind him

that when his government was in power they proposed exactly the same type of system, with one small change: that they would restrict the provision of health care in that system to people who were members of a trade union. We didn't think that was fair. We thought the idea of one single point of entry was good, but we thought it would be best to open it up to all workers, whether they be unionized or not. Consequently we have the CCAC, which was an outgrowth of an NDP idea.

He agrees with us that there's a shortage of long-term-care beds. That did not happen overnight. For the last 10 years we have not opened up a long-term-care bed in the province. He must have missed the minister's announcement this morning, where she talked about reinvesting — and the Premier — \$1.2 billion in long-term care for the benefit of those people who are trapped in hospital beds and should be in long-term-care beds.

I appreciate the comments of the member for Windsor-Riverside. I just wanted to remind him of a couple of small points he may have overlooked.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): I was interested in hearing the member for Windsor-Riverside focus in particular on his concerns with health care, which are certainly concerns that we in our caucus share. I was also appreciative of some of the concerns he had about the way in which long-term care and community care is or is not being provided in his home community.

1840

One of the concerns that I continue to have, even after today's announcement, is that in this attempt to try and meet the needs in health care, in what is obviously an area where there is increasing demand for more health care and an aging population with tremendous stresses on the system, this government wants to address all of the emerging needs with the existing pot of money, that anything that's done in one area to meet one emerging need is done at the expense of another area.

Do we need more community care? Yes, of course we do. We've wanted to see an increase in community care to meet the obvious need there for a very long time. But with this government we can only have an improvement in community care services if we accept the drastic reduction in acute care beds, a reduction that is so drastic that we know that we have women with newborn babies who are having to leave hospital after 24 hours and many of them are returning with babies who are ill because they're not sure how to care for those babies when they come home.

Interjection.

Mrs McLeod: The member for Huron is challenging the statistics. She should talk to some of the experts in the field who are expressing concern about the fact that without acute care beds, women are in fact being sent out of hospital too early with new babies, one of the reasons why we believe it should be mandatory to not allow hospitals to evict those women before they've had at least 48 hours of care.

Today we see that we're going to see some movement on long-term care over a long time, eight years, but some movement on long-term-care beds which are clearly

needed with an aging population, with the waiting list that we have in this province. It's going to be at the expense of chronic care beds, and as the member for Windsor-Riverside has touched on, as our health critic has, it's a very different kind of care.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I want to rise and compliment the member for Windsor-Riverside on his response to the throne speech. I'm not the least bit surprised that much of his comments were focused around the issue of health care.

During the run-up to his election in the by-election of September 4 of last year, health care was the issue on the doorsteps of people in Windsor. I was one of those who was proudly down there helping him to achieve the great victory that he did on that day, and I can tell you at first hand that health care, health care, health care was the issue that drove that by-election, and the fact that it was New Democrat Wayne Lessard who won speaks volumes about how this province views the health care agenda of this government.

I'm equally not surprised that he raised the Environmental Commissioner's report today, hot off the press. Let me reiterate what the member for Windsor-Riverside has already stated. First of all, with regard to the throne speech itself on page 9, again it says — this is the government talking — "Understanding the role that a clean environment plays in attracting jobs and investment, your government is determined to improve our air and water quality..." blah, blah, blah. What a lot of bull. The fact is that this report that came out today said the opposite. This is the commissioner's foreword to her report:

"Overall, environmental health continues to be a very low priority for the ministers of this province. Ministry business plans indicate that ministers are withdrawing from their environmental commitments. More and more, they are failing to integrate their responsibility for the environment into their core business plans."

There you go. If the by-election wasn't enough to tell you that you're on the wrong track with health care, then how about listening to the Environmental Commissioner who's telling you that you're making health matters worse.

The Deputy Speaker: Further questions or comments? Further debate?

Mr Lessard: Don't I get to respond, Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker: Sorry, yes. Member for Windsor-Riverside, you can sum up.

Mr Lessard: I want to thank the members for Chatham-Kent, Fort William and Hamilton Centre for their comments with respect to my remarks on the speech from the throne.

The member for Chatham-Kent mentions the ministry announcement with respect to long-term-care beds. That's an announcement that of course we look forward to seeing delivered, but we've had the announcement from the Health Services Restructuring Commission already in Windsor and a number of communities have had those announcements about how many long-term-care beds

there should be in their communities. They've agreed that there's a shortage and that shortage needs to be addressed.

We are concerned that's going to come at the expense of acute care beds, just as the member for Fort William has said. If it comes at the expense of acute care beds, we know that's going to lead to more privatization, more two-tier health care in the system, because long-term-care beds aren't covered under the Canada Health Act. It could lead to privatization of those beds, underfunding of hospitals so that more people are forced out of acute care beds into long-term-care beds, and that's going to be to the detriment of health care and the quality of health care in our province.

I want to thank the member for Hamilton Centre as well for tying my remarks with respect to health care into my remarks about the environment, because there's something else the Environmental Commissioner said that I think is important. She says, "I remind ministers that a healthy environment is an important part of a healthy economy and a healthy society." A healthy environment is an integral part of a healthy society. If we ignore our environment, we are going to be spending increasing amounts of money towards health care that we don't need to be spending; we need to be preventing environmental disasters and improving health care in our province.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): It's certainly more than polite for me to say what a pleasure it is to be able to respond to a throne speech that was such an excellent speech, with such excellent content. It's very obvious from the throne speech, that focused on jobs and the economy, that our government's policies are putting Ontario on the road to recovery. That's so evident all across the country. I know it's very upsetting to the opposition to see that, but indeed it is truly happening.

The Lieutenant Governor in reading the throne speech made the statement: "The economy, too, gives us reason for optimism."

All around, we see: Retail sales at an unprecedented level. Consumer and business confidence high. Housing starts up. Welfare rolls shrinking."

There's just no question, when you see a net increase of some 341,000 new jobs in the private sector during this term, that things are happening: halfway to the commitment we made to the people of Ontario approximately three years ago. In the last 12 months, jobs are up by a net of 261,000, an absolute record in job creation for this province, not like what happened from 1990 to 1995 when there was actually a net loss of jobs here in the province.

Obviously, the policies are working and are having a very, very positive effect on the economy, on the lives of the people who live in Ontario. They're policies of reducing red tape and getting rid of an awful lot of bureaucracy; they're policies of reducing payroll taxes; they're policies of reducing income tax, putting money back into the pockets of Ontarians so they can spend it in better ways than government would spend it. It's stimulating the economy, and there is just absolutely no question that is occurring.

The opposition is saying: "Oh, the tax cuts don't work. The reduction in bureaucracy won't work." But I can tell you, with no question, that the evidence absolutely disagrees with their position. Clearly, Ontario is the fastest-growing economy in Canada. As a matter of fact, I understand it's the fastest-growing economy in all of the G-7 countries.

I'm certainly not alone with this comment. There are many others who recognize it in a similar manner. For example, TD, or Toronto-Dominion Bank, in their recent economic forecast said that Ontario's the place to be. What a neat ring that has. It notes that consumer spending has been boosted by things like employment gains, and of course that totally relates to reduction in payroll taxes, reduction in income tax and umpteen other taxes that have been reduced during the last three years.

Today, very few of the public question this cut in income tax, how it's stimulating the economy. The opposition and the third party still quibble about it, but if you happened to tune in to CFRB about a week ago when the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the third party were tooting what they were going to do by stopping that tax cut if they had an opportunity, the phone-in afterwards was phenomenally on side for the position of this government. They did not agree with the Leader of the Opposition or with the leader of the third party that to stop the tax cut was right. They totally agreed with the position we are taking.

1850

The Royal Bank analysis states that Ontario's outlook is rosy. In 1998, they are saying, GDP growth will be 3.7%, and that's after a growth last year of some 4%. We have the second-highest expectation in Canada for GDP, with only Newfoundland coming in ahead of us. The report goes on to state that if you combine the reduction in personal income tax burden and the lower interest rates, there is no question that demand for domestic cars and other consumer goods is going up significantly.

Our Liberal colleagues would like to give credit to the federal government for reducing interest rates. It couldn't be further from the truth. The real reason that interest rates are down is because the provinces across this nation have their fiscal houses in order. The reason the federal government balanced their books was because it was on the backs of the provinces. If you look at what they did, they made very minor cuts to themselves but major cuts in transfer payments to the provinces. For example, they have cut payments to Ontario by over \$2 billion a year.

Take, for comparison, what Ontario did, with our government's very minor cuts to our transfer payments — to some of the rural municipalities, the smaller ones — for a 1.7% expectation in savings. But what did we do to ourselves? We made marked cuts to everything from political staff to ministers to the size of the cabinet to the size of the bureaucracy. Some 14,000 civil servants have been laid off — not easy, a real tough decision, tough things to do, but we put our house in order first before we started making minor cuts to the transfer partners.

With our financial houses in order across Canada and helping the Liberals federally get theirs under control, there is less money going out to be loaned to the provinces and to the federal government, and consequently, there is more money available and you end up with lower interest rates.

Let me tell you, the good news continues. The Bank of Montreal, in its employment analysis, predicts there will be a significant reduction in the jobless rate in this coming year. They also reiterate that last year was indeed a historical level for job growth in Ontario.

A few of you, from both the official opposition and the third party, were at the standing committee on finance and economic affairs when Dr Sherry Cooper presented to us. She is a vice-president of Nesbitt Burns. As a Conservative, I was rather embarrassed about how complimentary she was about the programs and the policies of our government.

I finally asked her how much of this relates to what we've been doing as a province and how much relates to the fact that the economy internationally and across Canada was moving ahead. Again she went on to an almost embarrassing point, saying it's the policies of this government that are pulling Canada up by its bootstraps. I said, "Do you mean that more than 70% of what's happening in Ontario and Canada is related to the policies of this government?" and she said, "Oh, yes, far more than 70%." If you question that, have a look at it in Hansard. It's there in hard print.

A survey that came out yesterday from Canada's top money managers said, "Ontario has been selected as the best place to invest in Canada." That's over the booming economy that we know is going on in Alberta, where there's another Conservative government. The worst places to invest are in Quebec and BC. We can understand the problems in Quebec, with the separatist movement, but in BC, what is the problem there? Another socialist government, that's what the problem is. The report says, "Ontario and Alberta have a clear advantage in terms of investment climate and conditions needed for faster economic growth."

Also boosting the Ontario advantage is the change in our labour laws. Our previous government was the most pro-union in the whole of the industrialized world. The unions didn't know it, but they had the greatest friends in government. But what did they do to them? They kicked them out of office. Why? Because of the greed of the unions. They couldn't even handle one of their own being in government. They totally destroyed them.

It's totally understandable. Bob Rae, your leader, the Premier of the day, understood. He understood that the biggest risk to social programs was the debt. He tried to do something about it, but you people in cabinet and on the back benches wouldn't give him a chance. He understood what was going on, and you and the unions totally devastated him.

It proves that the policies of this government are indeed working. With lower taxes for business and for individuals, the reduction in bureaucracy and the reduction in red

tape, Ontario has ended up leading in job creation across this country. We're leading in the help wanted index — just have a look in the newspapers; it's there for you — and we're leading because the income tax will soon be the lowest in the country, right across Canada. It's because this government believes that when you tax, you should be good shepherds and shear the sheep, not skin them. The previous government was out to skin every sheep in the province; they weren't prepared to allow those sheep to simply be sheared.

Interjection.

Mr Galt: Do you like that, Minister of Agriculture? I thought you would like that comparison.

In contrast, as you look at the BC experience — that's sort of Canada's left coast — the socialist NDP government is trying to drown the provincial economy in the Pacific Ocean, something like a poor little defenceless kitten. In the global village economy in the late 1990s, BC has now become the village idiot. Canada's economy is increasing; meanwhile, BC is really teetering and going into a recession. In BC, the housing market is flagging, the forest industry is shrinking, the unemployment rate is going way up and consumer confidence is going down, literally disappearing.

As a matter of fact, I was in BC back in March at the global conference and I just happened to go by a fast-food outlet, because that's all I could afford. The owner happened to see that my badge was from Ontario — it didn't indicate I was an MPP — and he asked me how quickly he could get moved to Ontario. He wanted out of BC and the present socialist government they have there.

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): Are they losing people or gaining people?

Mr Galt: They're losing, and they're going to Alberta; that's where they're going, at a phenomenal rate. The polls indicate that in BC the number one issue is business confidence, and it's certainly going down.

What went wrong in BC? It used to be the place to be. Until 1995, BC was outpacing the rest of Canada; it was really paralleling the US. Of course, here in Ontario we were just dragging weight back there, not doing very well at all. But what would you expect would go on, with an NDP government led by Glen Clark, who used to be a union organizer, following policies that were previously those of the NDP government under the wacky Mike Harcourt? By comparison, Saskatchewan, with a left-leaning government led by Roy Romanow — he knows the importance of balanced books and paying down the debt. Saskatchewan is going places. Poor old Clark. Increased spending, socialist policies, have failed everywhere else, but he's still following in there, being a true socialist.

In the early 1990s they took the business community for granted. The agenda totally ignored the economic concerns and competitive issues. They enacted new sales tax on heavy machinery for business. They imposed high corporate taxes. They increased the stumpage fees for forestry and totally strangled the forest industry. The bottom line is that they killed the goose that laid the

golden egg; not only that, they cooked it and ate it for supper. Business, as I mentioned earlier, is relocating out of BC to Alberta faster than all the other business coming into BC put together. The migration is absolutely phenomenal. Taxes do kill small business.

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Small business is one of the important sectors; 70% of the firms in Canada are small businesses, and they employ fewer than five people on the average. Taxes are the greatest factor of their failure, four out of five times. The businesses typically consume a third of the municipal services, but they pay two thirds of the municipal taxes. But they're also saddled with income tax, payroll tax and so on, plus costs for garbage collection, telephone rates and electrical rates are higher.

The myth is that business owners are rich and can afford it. Well, according to Statistics Canada, entrepreneurs have a median salary \$15,000 less than the median employee in Canada. They work 13 hours more per week. The result is that a significant number of small business owners are well below the poverty line and they work for far less than the minimum wage required to pay their employees.

But do we see the NDP out there demonstrating to support them and work on their behalf? No, they're just out there protesting against the small businessman trying to make a living. These fledgling businesses often do this with little profit and with unfair taxes being so damaging to them. These groups are the ones we are asking to be the creators of jobs and of wealth.

Canada is the world champion in property tax measured as a percentage of the GDP. In Canada our property and our wealth tax is about 4.1% of GDP; in the US it is 3.3%; in the UK and Sweden it is 2.6%; in Germany it is 1.6%; and in Italy it is 1%.

But there is some hope for the future. An American president once said that business is the business of Americans. The throne speech stated, "Your government was elected on a plan to turn the province around, strengthen the economy and create jobs." I am very proud that we are winning on all fronts mentioned. In other words, we're making business the business of Ontarians.

There was a statement in the last budget speech that Ontarians want all who need jobs to have jobs. In general in Ontario, they want to reduce the tax burden, get the budget balanced and then tackle the debt so we don't pass this on to our next generation. The goals are shared by many millions of people in Ontario, and we've pledged to keep the faith and make sure this is a better place to live.

The throne speech is really a pledge to follow through on our promises and to deliver a smaller government that costs less and does a better job. It reiterates the commitment to welfare reform, to education reform, to health care reform and to provide an opportunity for our young people. The goals in the Common Sense Revolution are still valid today, as they were very valid three years ago.

Although special interest groups and some unions dogmatically oppose our reforms, most in Ontario recognize the need for change, and our government is providing

that change. The speech from the throne was really a progress report on what we as a government are doing in Ontario. It reaffirms that indeed we are on track for a prosperous future, for a new future of hope, opportunity and growth for our young people.

It also reflects the fact that this is probably the most compassionate government Ontario has ever seen. It is extremely compassionate, because we are looking down the road for our young people. We want social programs and a safety net for our young people in the future.

Yes, you can give out all the candy in the candy store today and have nothing tomorrow, and that is exactly how the Liberals have been. Tax, spend and borrow has been their policy, and as you move down the road, that is not compassionate. That is simply being greedy to get the votes today. This government is extremely compassionate in looking at tomorrow, looking at what our young people would be saddled with down the road.

That's our commitment to the people of Ontario and I can assure you we are honouring that commitment, and as a result, I can assure you that a Mike Harris government will be returned to office in the next election. Unfortunately, I can't be the first to tell you that. It has already been reported in the *Star* over the last couple of weeks.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): You know, there's one thing about a Reform provincial parliamentarian: He's never wrong. I think that everything the member for Northumberland went through tonight, including the last comment about compassion, is one where there's no room for compromise. I think he should use the word "compromise" occasionally instead of "compassion." But he's just never wrong.

I come from a riding that doesn't make a lot of fuss unless things aren't right. I certainly get telephone calls from my constituents and I have yet to hear the word "compassion" mentioned in any of those phone calls when they have made reference to this government.

Then the member for Northumberland in his speech I think offended almost everybody in this country that he could, almost every province. As I said, and it may not have been heard because I uttered it rather quietly, I think perhaps the economic development, trade and tourism minister, Mr Palladini, should put on one of those caps that were made in a foreign country in order to enhance jobs in Ontario and send him out as an ambassador. I think he'd make a great ambassador.

The member for Northumberland talked about turning the province around. The one problem when you start to turn things around is that you may end up finding you've gone 360 degrees and you're right back where you started from. I think this government has not only gone 360 degrees; they've started to go way around the other way again, and I would say, when it comes to health care and education in this province, that they've gone a bit too far in their turnaround.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I just want to say that I wasn't offended by anything the member for Northumberland said. I found it quite entertaining, actually,

particularly the fact that in a debate in which he's talking about the throne speech of his government, he spent more time criticizing the NDP government in BC than he did praising his own government. I found that really interesting.

Mr Christopherson: He's practising to be an opposition member.

Mr Silipo: As my colleague says, he's practising to be an opposition member, and the voters at the end of the day will decide that for all of us.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): We want to be just like you.

Mr Silipo: Let me say to the member, you could do worse.

There are a couple of impressions the member left, and I'm sure he would not want to leave these impressions, so I just want to correct a couple of things he said.

He talked a couple of times about the throne speech. At one time he said, "The Lieutenant Governor said," and then went on to quote almost as if it was a kind of third-party endorsement of what his government is doing, almost as if it was somebody else out there objectively judging what his government is doing and then putting it into a speech and that somehow that has a lot of credence. Of course he knows, I know, we all know that the speech from the throne is read by the Lieutenant Governor but that it's written by the Premier and the people around the Premier. In fact, we're having an interesting discussion on an issue that's going on around that very issue in terms of some of the things that were said in the speech from the throne that shouldn't have been said.

In the couple of seconds that are left, I also wanted to deal with another misunderstanding, perhaps, that the member opposite had when he talked about the two opposition leaders talking about reinstating the tax cut. I just want to make sure he understands very clearly that as far as we understand, the Liberal leader has clearly said that he won't reinstate the tax cut. I wouldn't want him to mislead people, because I'm sure he wouldn't want to do that. We have said and our leader today reiterated that we would reinstate a portion of the tax cut for the 6% of people who make over \$80,000, because we think —

The Deputy Speaker: The member's time is up. Further questions and comments?

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I too wish to make some comments on the speech by the member for Northumberland. First I want to comment on the characteristic understatement he used in delivering his remarks. He was I think totally non-partisan in the way he analysed the throne speech. I thought he avoided making provocative remarks and was characteristically fair and balanced in his analysis of the issues. We don't always get that from the opposition, but we can always count on that from the member for Northumberland.

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I think perhaps the opposition fail to recognize that Doug was finding a whole new meaning for the word "compassionate," and in doing that I think he spread a lot of light on perhaps a broader understanding of what

"compassionate" really means and how it applies to being a Conservative.

On a more serious note, though, I think when one reflects back on the early 1990s and the late 1980s and what it was like to be in small business — and the member has been in a small business experience, although perhaps a little earlier than that, in his life. He knows the realities of being in small business, the difficulties of dealing with endless payroll taxes, and he knows that our government has certainly put a lot of energy into trying to relieve the concerns that small business people have.

Certainly in the throne speech, one of the issues that cannot be overlooked is the fact that small businesses are creating an awful lot of jobs in Ontario. Job creation in Ontario is extraordinarily high compared to other jurisdictions in Canada. I think the member was certainly full value for those remarks and for his indication of how that is in fact a compassionate policy for us to take.

Mr Cullen: I have to say, having listened to the remarks that preceded me here, specifically the comments made by the member for Northumberland about how compassionate this government is in its speech from the throne, that for the community I represent, this will be a radical turning point in the behaviour of this government if indeed it proves true that it is compassionate, because for the past two and half or three years it has not been compassionate to the vulnerable in my community.

I can only think of the women in abusive situations who were looking for shelters and found they had no place to go because shelter funding was cut by this government.

I can only think, as a former member of the children's aid society in Ottawa-Carleton, how families who wanted to have service to deal with their difficult situations found themselves calling up the CAS and running into Harris days because this government had cut funding to the children's aid societies.

I can only think of the 21.6% cut to welfare rates. The rents did not go down, and suddenly in Ottawa-Carleton we had a tremendous run-up on the use of food banks.

I can only think even now, today, of this government, with its education funding formula, taking money away from our children with special learning needs in my community.

I can only think of what's happening in the developmental services area, where we have parents with adult children who are being told, "You have to meet new needs but you've got to give up one quarter of your sheltered workshops; you've got to give up these residential beds." Such compassion is being shown for these people who have worked so long and so hard to get what they have, and they're being told they have to sacrifice it.

The word "compassion" is a word that one does not associate with the Mike Harris Tories. Actions speak louder than words.

Mr Galt: First, to the member for Essex South, thank you for your comment and for your note. That was very kind.

Thanks to the member for Dovercourt and the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay and also the member for Ottawa West for your comments.

I think it's interesting to note that just a second ago there was reference made to food banks and welfare. Prior to the Liberals being in government here in Ontario, I don't think the term "food bank" was even known in this province. They expanded at a phenomenal rate in the late 1980s. That was in the good times, and it certainly was not because of their government that we had good times in Ontario. It was also the time when welfare rates went up at just one phenomenal rate. And they're saying that we're not a compassionate government?

The member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay made reference to the compassion of this government. I can tell you it really is. We're looking out for our young people down the road, that they're not saddled with a phenomenal debt.

You take the debt that the federal government has: \$583 billion. I'm not saying it was only the Liberals that contributed to that, but I am told that of all those dollars, \$583 billion, only 7% of that actually was spent for services. The rest was for interest and compound interest. That is not being compassionate. That's just being greedy in the day, trying to get people to vote for you. Very unfortunate circumstance we're in federally when a third of the dollar goes to pay the interest on the debt.

I can tell you that in the province of Ontario we were headed for that very quickly, and that's being very uncompassionate for our future generations and our future children. Just ask a child in secondary school or in university if they're prepared — break it down to somewhere around \$40,000 to \$50,000 that they owe to the province and to the federal government. They're saying: "I didn't create that debt. Why are you laying it on me?"

This is about being compassionate and reducing the debt we're dumping on them.

Mrs McLeod: I'm happy to have an opportunity to participate in this debate. There are many issues that are touched on or left out of the speech from the throne that I would welcome an opportunity to speak on, but because the time allotted to each of us is somewhat limited, I'm going to restrict my comments to those issues in the throne speech — or, as I say, issues that have been left out of the throne speech that should be here — that relate to my concerns as the education critic for our caucus.

I'm going to turn to pages 10 and 11 of the throne speech, lest there be any doubt that I am referring specifically to what the government is claiming to do for education in this speech from the throne. This is the section that's called "Educating Our Children for the Future." This is the section in which this government once again talks about the importance of a high quality of education and the goals of achieving excellence.

I want it clear that I do not disagree with the importance of ensuring a high quality of education. That's been one of my commitments for all of my adult life and the 30 years that I've been involved in politics. I certainly

do not quarrel with the goal of achieving excellence in education. What I do disagree with very strongly is this government's constant attempt to portray our publicly funded education system as broken, as less than excellent, in order to justify the kind of radical changes that their agenda necessitated they impose on our educational system.

It frustrates me, and I know it is demoralizing for people who have a commitment to public education and who deliver that education to the students in our classrooms, when this government deliberately misrepresents the achievements of our system and of our teachers and of our students in order to make the case that the education system is broken.

It frustrates people when the government presents the results of our students on national tests in such a way that they fail to take into account the real achievement of our students when you recognize we have the greatest percentage of students in any province whose first language is not English.

It concerns me that this government totally ignores the fact that one of the achievements of our system — and I consider this excellent — is that we have the highest percentage of people obtaining a high school diploma of any province in this country. That is in large measure due to the success of the adult education programs which this government has so totally and completely and finally devastated with its recent funding formula.

I see a government that in the name of excellence and its definition of excellence, in its stated concern about standards and about reporting, is now insisting on a kindergarten curriculum that is not going to take any account of readiness to learn and let those individual differences be appreciated and responded to in the classroom.

I see a government that is forcing primary school teachers to give letter grades to primary school kids, six-year-olds, when their differences are not academic, but developmental. As somebody said to me recently, "Would you take a sixteen-month-old baby who hadn't learned to walk yet and stamp 'R' for remedial on that baby's forehead?" I wonder how early the discouragement will set in for these young children and how many dropouts will now be born in our grade 1 classes.

My fear is that this government, in the name of standards, wants to take us back to the days of the 1950s when I was in school and when 50% of my classmates didn't make it past grade 9. I don't define that as excellence. I don't consider excellence to be found in a system that is prepared to leave many behind.

I suppose in some ways I was a little bit encouraged in the speech from the throne to find the government itself acknowledging that, because they say, "Only excellence will ensure that all students...are able to realize their full potential...." That is the essence of the goal of public education: to allow every student to fulfil his or her full potential. I suppose I should be encouraged that the government is at least acknowledging that as a goal.

The words are right. I only wish this government's actions were not so totally inconsistent with the goals, because this government's "all" leaves out the junior kindergarten students who have already been shut out of our school system or who are now going to be in classes of 25 or more without any educational assistant support because this government is not funding the educational assistants who helped out in those junior kindergarten and senior kindergarten classes.

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This government's "all" doesn't include students whose ability to participate in a classroom at all is dependent on those teacher assistants who are going to disappear next fall. Today there were pink slips given out to some 270 educational assistants in the Halton Board of Education, who provide exactly that kind of support to special needs students who, without it, will not be able to leave their classroom to go to the bathroom, will not be able to get up to the bus at the end of the school day, will not be able to work unless there is somebody actually holding their hand and guiding a pencil. I'm not sure there is going to be any way for those students to stay in an integrated classroom or in a special education classroom or to go to school at all, unless this government can be persuaded that all students should have a chance to fulfil their potential, including those with special needs who need that extra support.

This government's "all" doesn't include the many students whose ability to get the support they need next year is going to be jeopardized because this government has taken about \$2 billion out of the education budgets of this province.

This government's "all" most certainly does not include the adults who need a real second chance to get that secondary school diploma and get a new start in life, because those programs will virtually cease to exist in their current forms as of September of this year.

This government's idea of helping students realize their full potential even stops short for our secondary school students, because this government is not prepared to offer a full range of programs and choices and options in secondary schools. Students, if your potential is in science, then God bless you, because you're going to get the full support of this government. That's where their focus is. That's what they're going to do for girls and women, make sure they can participate in science, and I'm all for it. But I don't think that should be at the expense of the kinds of choices that students with other needs and broader needs have to have. I think there should be a place for music programs and art programs and physical education programs and Canadian history programs, and a whole host of programs that will be lost with this government's secondary school so-called curriculum reform.

I get very nervous when I hear this government talk about excellence and quality. But I get angry — not nervous but angry — when I read in the speech from the throne or when I see in the million dollars' worth of the most recent advertising on education that this government

has taken out, with taxpayers' money, that excellence is going to be assured by more dollars in the classroom, when I look at the funding formula and I read the government's own numbers and I know that \$900 million more in cuts is built into that same funding formula and I know that the dollars being kept in education are going to support the 25,000 new students coming into our school system every year for the next three years so that there will be no increase in dollars per student in the classroom. That fact gets left out of the government's advertising campaigns. The fact that the funding for students is going to decrease for every single student in this province over the next few years gets left out of this government's advertising campaign.

I get angry when this government puts extracurricular activities into a category of "non-classroom" and therefore says they don't need to be supported, that they're not part of what a student needs to develop his or her potential. I wonder how many high school graduates this government has talked to who feel that their opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities were the way in which they both enjoyed their school and stayed in school and developed their potential. But then this is a government that puts even the heating and lighting of our classrooms into the non-classroom category and fails to see what are really essential supports to students.

It makes me angry when this speech says that excellence will be achieved because more of teachers' time will be spent teaching when in fact there are going to be fewer teachers teaching more classes to more students in our secondary schools, and that means less teacher time for individual students. That, to my mind, means less quality, not more.

I am concerned when this government talks about their initiatives in curriculum. They say "back to the basics" curriculum. It's back to the basics all right, because they are taking what were a thousand courses in our secondary schools, and do you know how many they are going to write in their new curriculum reform? Two hundred courses. We go from a thousand courses, with the options that offers to students, to 200 courses. That's what "back to the basics" means to this government. I get concerned about their curriculum initiatives being applauded when I know that the process, this contracted-out process, for writing the secondary school curriculum is in total and absolute chaos.

But chaos is the real hallmark of this government, certainly when it comes to education. We have seen a massive restructuring that leaves our trustees across this province with very little role other than to make the kinds of cuts this government has demanded they make. We have seen constant cost-cutting accompanying this massive restructuring. There is such a host of unanswered questions still about the restructuring, about the trustees' role, about the parents' role, about even the technical details of the funding formula — total chaos. Throughout all this time, we have had the government, which is supposed to be responsible for ensuring opportunities for students in education, constantly attacking not only the

system but the people who are entrusted with delivering education.

The most recent example, and one of the most inhumane examples, is what this government did to principals and vice-principals, the educational leaders in our schools, when they left them without any idea of what their future situation was going to be in the schools until the day before they had to make the decision about whether they would stay in those roles as education leaders or return to the classroom. They didn't even know that day, when they had to make their choice, how drastically the government would cut the amount of dollars available for educational leadership, because that too is now considered a non-classroom activity.

How many people know that under the funding formula there is only one vice-principal for every 1,333 elementary school students? How many people know that there's only one principal for 909 secondary school students, and how many secondary schools don't have 909 students and aren't going to qualify for a full-time principal? Where is the leadership going to come from to implement all these so-called changes that this government wants to boast about in its throne speech?

I don't believe you can bring about any kind of "positive change," whatever words are in this throne speech, in the midst of such constant and total chaos. If the members opposite don't believe that's what's out there, just go out and talk to any teacher in this school system. I don't believe you can bring in constructive change when you destroy the educational leadership and when you constantly attack and make enemies of the people you trust to deliver that education.

It's ironic when I read in this throne speech the statement that this government, that has for two and a half solid years done nothing but attack educators, is now going to recognize excellence and achievement by both students and teachers. It's a little late. I find it puzzling that the government says they're now going to shift their attention to ensuring that students have the discipline to learn, and support of parents at home. I don't know what that means as a new priority. There are lots of things out there that the government still needs to deal with. The chaos has not been addressed; the questions haven't been answered.

But they have a new focus: discipline for students and support of parents. Does that mean they're trying to say that students who are struggling to learn just aren't working hard enough? Make them work a little harder and those grades will come up, regardless of any special needs they have? Are they trying to say the parents are to blame, and that's why they have the parents having to be part of this new report card system? I know this government likes to pass the buck, but they have taken total control of education and the buck is going to stop with them whether they like it or not, when the supports that children need to learn aren't there.

The government says: "Don't worry, we've put more money into education. For instance" — and it says it in the throne speech — "we have increased the funding for early

childhood education." There are words and allegations we are not allowed to make under parliamentary decorum, so let me simply tell you the facts of early childhood funding: \$145 million cut two years ago from junior kindergarten funding; \$197 million in new cuts to early childhood education, the junior kindergarten to grade 3 years. There was \$102 million put back in, and I think that's what the government means when they say they've increased funding. They forgot about the fact that they cut \$300 million, and that \$102 million back in, when you cut \$300 million, is still not an increase. Call it whatever is allowed under parliamentary decorum, Madam Speaker, but there has been no increase in early childhood education funding here. They cannot erase the record.

But what makes me truly sad is that the legacy of this government's actions will weigh far greater than their words, and it will be the price in lost learning opportunities for thousands of children, young children and adults.

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I would spend a few moments on the whole issue of private sector partnerships, which are of course mentioned in the throne speech, although not nearly to the extent that the Minister of Education has discussed them in recent weeks as he talks about the privatization through leasing of school space; the privatization alternatives for early childhood education; the privatization of custodial services, which perhaps may be forced by this government's funding formula; and indeed the ability of the private sector to provide textbooks, since the government is not providing enough money for textbooks — \$50 million for one year only provides one textbook per child, not enough textbooks for an entirely new elementary and secondary school curriculum.

But I'm not going to dwell on that, because I want to take a moment at least on post-secondary education. It should take more than a moment. There should be something in here about post-secondary education. There is one line, one line on page 8. It says, "The government is committed to universities, colleges and apprenticeship and training programs that prepare young adults for future employment." I'd like to think post-secondary education does more than that, but even that statement is not borne out by this government's actions. How can you talk about a commitment to universities and colleges when this is a government that has cut \$400 million from colleges and universities and left our university system, at least, the lowest of any province in Canada in its per capita funding? It's absolutely clear that the government has made no commitments to the students of this province. They're making students pay for the cuts the government has made to the colleges and universities.

When the universities and colleges implement the permissive 20% further increase in tuition fees, the increase in tuition for students will top 60%. And that's just the beginning, because beyond that we have a new deregulated environment. We're already starting to see the escalation in tuition fees in graduate programs, professional programs and college diploma programs. The

sky is the limit. The government has walked away from any responsibility for controlling either tuition fee increases or student debt load. As tuition fees increase, the student debt load, which is already such a concern, will skyrocket.

The government's answer to that, if there was anything in the throne speech, would have been, "We're going to bring in a new income-contingent repayment plan." It seems to me that was in an earlier throne speech, or maybe it was the last budget. But the banks have said: "I'm sorry, government, we're not prepared to help you with that. We're not prepared to help you with it, because we are already concerned that the student debt load is too great." Even the banks are telling you they cannot finance the kind of student debt you are imposing on the students of this province.

This government's answer was to say: "We'll find some way of doing it, maybe. We won't put it in the throne speech, because obviously we're a little short on delivery here too." In the meantime, they cancelled the loan forgiveness program and they replaced it with something they call a "grant," only the grant has a cap on it. So if you're a single student, all you get now per year to offset your debt, if you're really needy, is about \$2,350. If you're a student who has dependent children, you can have a \$10,000 grant, up against average debt loads that begin now at \$25,000 and are going to increase enormously under a deregulated environment.

The result of this will be an indebted generation of graduates. When the members opposite talk about burdening future generations with debt, let me tell them that this government is guilty of burdening a whole generation of graduating students with a debt that nobody ever imagined they would have to face. Students will not incur that debt. They will not start these programs. They are already suffering, as our leader has said, from sticker shock, because they are afraid to incur the debts and this government is leaving them with no alternative but to incur debt.

I have virtually run out of time. There is so much more to talk about when it comes to education — elementary, secondary, post-secondary. But I think the overall message of this throne speech — what is in the throne speech and maybe even more importantly what's not in the throne speech, what the throne speech says versus what this government has actually done — when it comes to education is that this government is not interested in students, this government isn't truly interested in quality or excellence or giving every student an opportunity to fulfil his or her potential. I'm afraid that the actions of the government and the impact of those actions on our schools and our colleges and universities just don't bear evidence that this government has that concern. This government is interested in cost-cutting and control and in a PR spin that will convince the public that it is about something else. What is truly, truly even more frightening than that is the reality of where this government wants to take education and what that will do to future students in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Silipo: I want to compliment the member for Fort William. She spent most of her time, as she said from the outset she was going to do, speaking about what the Harris government is doing to education. As I listened to her comments and the passion and the strength with which she continued her attack on what the Mike Harris government is doing, I found myself time after time agreeing with virtually everything she was saying in terms of the devastation that Mike Harris and his government are causing to our school system, from the school systems here in Toronto right through to the rest of the province. She spoke with clear strength and conviction on that. She and I may have disagreed, have disagreed in fact, on a number of issues in the past, but in this area, in terms of her strong belief that what Mike Harris is doing is wrong, I share that belief.

I have a question I want to put to her, however. I'm sure she will appreciate that part of our role as members of the opposition, particularly now as we are getting into the second part of this mandate, is not just to criticize what Mike Harris is doing — that is part of our role — but our role also involves talking about what it is that we would do. I think we can infer from what the member for Fort William said some of the things she and her government would do if they were to become the government. But I need to come back to this question of how it is that we would pay for this. I think it's a legitimate question that's on the minds of voters, and if the New Democratic Party and her party, the Liberal Party, are talking about reinvesting in education, I think it's only fair that we also say to people where the money is going to come from.

She will know that her leader has very clearly said that they will not reinstate any of the 30% income tax cut that Mike Harris is about to complete putting into place. Our leader on the other hand has made it very clear that if we were to form the government, we would take back the tax cut from that top 6% of taxpayers, which would get us about \$1.5 billion, which would go a long way to being able to have the money to reinvest in the kind of education system we want to have.

Mr Galt: I am pleased to have the chance to respond to the member for Fort William. I used to consider her quite an honourable member, but she played rather fast and loose with the facts she was delivering here this evening.

She talked about attacks on educators. All I can say is that with the kind of information she was providing, it's no wonder that educators and unions get upset over what's going on in education. It's very understandable, when you hear that kind of information.

She talked about the funding for adult education being slashed. Wrong. She talked about junior kindergarten funding being slashed. In the upcoming funding formula, it's there, ma'am, it's there. There's excellence and quality of education. There has not been \$2 billion cut from education, as she has suggested.

She talked about a reduction in the number of students going into universities and colleges. The Minister of Agriculture can vouch for the fact that there's a significant increase in the number of students applying to and attend-

ing agricultural colleges and agricultural universities in this province, so that particular point is certainly not there. I'd go on, but I see we're out of time.

The Deputy Speaker: Actually, wait a minute. The clock got stuck, but I timed the approximate — if I can have consent, we will deem that to be his two minutes. Can I get consent for that? Agreed? Agreed. I believe he had about two minutes. Okay, your time is up.

The clock is now working, is it?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Northumberland, sorry. The clock was stuck, but I was timing you and your two minutes were up.

Mr Galt: Are you sure?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, approximately sure. Further questions and comments?

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Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I would certainly like to give my positive comments and feedback to the member for Fort William for her very thoughtful and very knowledgeable comments about education. I find it amusing that the member for Northumberland tries to depict the member for Fort William as not knowing her education issues. I would dare the member for Northumberland to debate, anywhere, any time the member for Fort William on education. You may know something about your field but I think you know very little about education. I would say it is very clear that the member for Fort William is saying what people all over Ontario are saying, that this government, like you, knows very little about what you've done to education.

You have gutted adult education and systematically gotten rid of a good program where people who could not get a full education as young people now can come back. Your government has gutted it. In Toronto, where we had thousands of young people or adults going back, they can't go back because of your government.

You got rid of junior kindergarten. There are over 20 boards that have got rid of junior kindergarten. Your government kept on saying it was nothing but a glorified babysitting service. Do I now hear you changing your mind about junior kindergarten? Maybe you're beginning to think like in the throne speech where they said, "Oh, maybe we're going to have to study it now with Dr Fraser Mustard."

Now with the new math this government puts on itself, it's going to pretend that things like junior kindergarten count, but people aren't going to buy it because we've seen the results of your gutting of a public education system that needed some fixing. Instead of fixing it, you bulldozed it, and you've got parents and students and teachers under attack because of your attack.

Mr Christopherson: I want to also commend the member for Fort William for her remarks. I think she has quite effectively outlined a number of the major concerns that I would say literally millions of Ontarians share. Her reference to the throne speech in terms of what you say and what you do is entirely accurate. I would add to that by pointing out that on page 6, under "Dialogue with Ontarians," you say that one of the most important con-

tributions that Ontarians make "has been their continued advice and counsel about how to build a brighter future for Ontarians." What a joke.

When you brought in Bill 160 there was an incredible amount of opposition, to the point where there were 126,000 teachers on the street in political protest. You can't tell me that you think they're all NDPers or Liberals. Some of them voted for you. They regret it now, but they did. Then when they got out there, you hoped that the parents would turn on them and you tried your little trick of trying to make the teachers a self-interest group. What happened? Parents came out in droves. They were baking cookies and bringing out hot chocolate and coffee to help them because they believed in the fight to preserve the education system the way it is. Yet you have the audacity to say that one of the most important contributions people make during your regime is to give their continued advice and counsel.

You aren't listening. There are no students out there saying you're doing the right thing. There are no parent groups out there saying you're doing the right thing. There are no teacher groups out there saying that. There are no trustees out there. The only ones saying it are your rich pals who are benefiting from the tax scheme.

Mrs McLeod: I appreciate the comments of my colleagues and I will confess at the outset of these two minutes that I am very emotional when I speak about education. I am unapologetically, passionately committed to the goals of public education, and for the first time in the 30 years that I've been involved in the politics of education, I truly believe the future of public education is threatened and the wellbeing of students threatened along with that.

I spent a year out of politics working with special needs kids and I anguish when I see what special needs students are losing on a daily basis, and I've come to know the adults who are desperate because their chance is being taken away. I care about that and I believe that anybody who would go out and talk to those adults would have to share that kind of caring.

I am emotional because I spend a good part of my week actually going out and talking to the people on the front lines who are trying, despite the constant attack of this government through its words and its actions and its withdrawal of dollars, to deliver a quality of education to our students. I see them demoralized and I know that they feel that they can't close the door and just teach kids any longer because this government keeps getting in the way. They're emotional and I share their emotion.

I simply say to the member for Northumberland that I would be happy any time you have the time to give you a back-to-the-basics — to borrow your government's words — primer on education funding in the funding formula. I will use only your government's own numbers and I will back up every claim that I've made, because while I may be emotional and indeed passionate about education and when I care about what your government is doing to kids, I am not emotional about facts. I am using your government's numbers. You've been giving selective numbers. You're believing your own government's PR spin.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): We have the red book, Lyn. We know where you stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Ottawa-Rideau, come to order.

Mr Galt: Would you like us to read the red book?

Mrs McLeod: Yes, I wish you would take it and actually do it. I'd like you to read the part about stable funding for years.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Further debate?

Mr Christopherson: I appreciate the opportunity to join in the response to the now infamous throne speech. I give the government credit for one thing. You've probably made what is normally a rather dull event in the broader scheme of things in terms of the public into a bona fide celebrity status. I suspect that at some point in time you could sell these suckers.

By beginning, let me just say that there's a saying that when you're dealing with someone you don't trust, get it in writing. Unfortunately, with this government, even that's not enough. If you take a look at what they've put in this throne speech in terms of what they've written and compare it to what they've done, you really do wonder what planet the government was on when they wrote this. This sure doesn't reflect the Ontario that I know. It sure as hell doesn't reflect the Hamilton that I know.

Because of the short time we now have, thanks to the anti-democratic measures of this government, I can only refer to two key areas. One will be the environment as it relates to my community, my home town of Hamilton, and second, the comments that are in here that affect labour as they relate to my critic portfolio.

In opening with the environment, let me point out that, as I said earlier today, we had the Environmental Commissioner's report, just released a few hours ago, a damning condemnation of this government's pathetic track record on watering down, diluting environmental standards and, without question, threatening the health of the very people that earlier members of the Tory caucus said they were so bloody compassionate about.

I want to raise this in terms of my response, because in the executive summary, which runs two pages, one page on each side, my home town of Hamilton is mentioned three times and the Plastimet disaster is also mentioned. That's four references in the executive summary alone that talk about my community and about why I've been on my feet so much with regard to the Plastimet fire and why it's not just a single opposition issue but a huge environmental issue that affects all Ontarians and affects their health. It affects our kids.

You say in your throne speech — this is on page 9; this is what you supposedly undertake to do — "Understanding the role that a clean environment plays in attracting jobs and investment, your government is determined to improve our air and water quality." That's what you said in writing in the throne speech.

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What does the Environmental Commissioner say in today's report? "Overall, environmental health continues to be a very low priority for the ministers of this province. Ministry business plans indicate that ministers are with-

drawing from their environmental commitments." "Withdrawing from their environmental commitments," but you say it's "determined to improve our air and water quality." What you say and the way the world is.

Our Environmental Commissioner goes on to say: "More and more, they" — that's you — "are failing to integrate their responsibilities for the environment into their core business plans and into their social, economic and scientific considerations. I remind these ministers that a healthful environment is an important part of a healthy economy and a healthy society." What you say and the reality.

She goes on to say: "I found that in the US new standards set by the Clean Air Act will be mandatory in every state, while in Ontario, our more stringent but unenforceable guidelines for inhalable particulates are regularly exceeded in cities such as Windsor, Hamilton, Toronto, Sault Ste Marie and London. Ontario's focus needs to change from one of granting regulatory relief for polluters to improving its commitments to the environmental health of its residents and the natural environment." I want to repeat that part: "Ontario's focus needs to change from one of granting regulatory relief for polluters...."

What do you say about that? On page 9, you talk about the fact that we as "MPPs will be asked to consider legislation...that eliminates job-killing red tape." I can remember speaking in this place on that very issue, acknowledging that there are sometimes procedures that are old and cumbersome and need to change and that you could legitimately say that's red tape that ought to be cut, but I made the argument that that's not what you were doing, that you were using that as a front to go after the standards that protect workers, protect children and, in this case, protect our environment, and the commissioner has called you on it. You've been caught, red-taped.

She goes on to say, "I found that many well-established monitoring programs were being restructured to cope with reduced resources." We know the slashing that has gone on in the Ministry of the Environment both in terms of its overall budget and the staff that are gone. Those people perform an important function in protecting our environment, but you like to write them off as just a bunch of bureaucrats, public sector people so obviously underworked and overpaid and therefore quite appropriate to be on your chopping block. That's the way you like to phrase these things and spin them out. But here's the reality. What you say and reality.

She goes on to say, "I also found that significant environmental information is not being collected, or if it is being collected, is not being analysed and reported." Of course, there's nobody there to do it. We didn't need those people. Remember? That was all the fat that was in the system. That was part of those thousands of people you were so proud of saying, "We're going to get rid of them." This is what they did.

In some cases, such as the targets for air quality, the monitoring data to assess progress to the targets are not being kept. Some programs such as the Hamilton and

Windsor air quality monitoring programs are not even related to any environmental targets. This is the price that the majority of Ontarians are paying for your tax scheme. If you're one of the wealthy, as my leader, Howard Hampton, pointed out earlier today in his response to the throne speech, you're doing quite well, in fact you're gaining, but if you're an ordinary working family, a middle-class family, and God help you if you're below middle class, you're losing on every front.

Now your very health is endangered in terms of the environment around you if you live in one of our older communities, like mine in Hamilton, like those in Windsor and in Sudbury and right here in Toronto. That's the price to be paid. But you don't care, because you can run around and say, "We cut taxes, we cut taxes, we cut taxes." The fact that our environment and now our health is at risk because of it and the fact that property taxes are going up and user fees in every category are going up doesn't matter to you as long as you can run around and say, "We cut taxes, we cut taxes." People are paying a horrendous price for your tax scheme, an incredible price, particularly the people in my home town of Hamilton.

Plastimet: In 1997, I received an application concerning the fire at the Plastimet recycling facility in Hamilton. I found that the Ministry of the Environment failed to explain why the Plastimet operation was considered to be exempt from regulatory requirements. The ministry cited no evidence in support of its contention that a certificate of approval is not required for Plastimet's activities. That was before the fire.

Despite the recommendation of the Ontario fire marshal to strengthen regulatory controls on recycling operations, which the former Solicitor General was out touting as so wonderful and so great and "Don't worry. We've taken care of everything. There's nothing to worry about any more," she goes on to say the Ministry of the Environment "does not agree that this is needed." So you come up with these regulations, and then when you're asked to enforce them, you say they're not needed. When every credible entity around the issue of Plastimet says there ought to be a public inquiry, your minister stonewalls.

Today he tried to say, "There might be some things that happened between 1990 and 1995 that might come out" — sort of looking at me across the House saying, "Hey, Dave, you want to be careful here because stuff is going to come out." Hey, whatever has to come out should come out and, quite frankly, as a Hamiltonian, I don't care whether it was the Liberals, the New Democrats or you. This is not a game of gotcha; this is an early warning. The canary just died, folks. We came so close to so many innocent people becoming at the very least very ill and possibly dying. There were 400 tonnes of this stuff that burned and it generated dioxins, and still your Minister of the Environment says, "Oh, no, we don't need a public inquiry." This document alone, seeing it as the culmination of all the people who have called for a public inquiry, should either force that minister to call a public inquiry or to resign in disgrace.

In the few minutes I have remaining, I want to move on to a labour issue that you raised in the speech from the throne. It didn't get an awful lot of coverage, for a lot of reasons. You say, in fact in the same sentence where you're talking about eliminating that job-killing red tape — don't forget what the environment minister said about red tape. The fact is those are regulations; they protect people — but in same sentence you create that fantasy universe, you go on to say that you're going to present us with legislation that further "amends labour legislation, particularly as it affects the construction industry." God help construction workers in Ontario when Mike Harris says, "I'm going to change legislation that affects your working life," because, let there be no doubt, every time you have touched a piece of labour legislation, some group of workers somewhere has lost some rights.

You further state — this almost deserves an award of its own — "Only excellence will guarantee our children the opportunities of decent, well-paying jobs." Decent, well-paying jobs? Every time you see one, you kill it. You've got thousands of decent, well-paying jobs right here in the public sector.

2000

Remember the people who used to do the monitoring in the Ministry of Environment, the people who used to do the inspections, the people who used to do the analysis? They, by and large, had decent, well-paying jobs. Where are they? Where are the jobs?

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): — the private sector.

Mr Christopherson: I hear one of the members hollering. I was waiting for it. Thank you; you were right on cue. I couldn't have set it up better. Talk about the private sector. Oh, yeah. You're going to talk to me about what you're going to do vis-à-vis public sector jobs going into the private sector as I'm talking about your comment about decent, well-paying jobs.

You brought in Bill 7, which was a brand-new Ontario Labour Relations Act, and in that document you took away the successor rights of every public sector Ontarian who worked for the province of Ontario. What does that mean? It means that when you privatize those jobs, the collective agreement does not go with the jobs, unlike virtually every other workplace in the province, whether it's private or public. That's a right that workers fought for and that workers have. You took that right away.

Why did you do it? Because you're planning to privatize those jobs, and to make it more attractive to your wealthy corporate pals, you're making sure the collective agreement is dead so that the decent wages that you talk about can't be maintained, so that the benefits that those workers have earned can't be maintained, so that the grievance procedures that those workers earned can't be maintained. That's why you brought in Bill 7 and it contains a denial of successor rights, and then you have the absolute hypocrisy and audacity to say that you guarantee and that you care about decent, well-paying jobs.

You're the same government that refuses to even consider moving the minimum wage. By the way, the

United States has now surpassed us, by the time you take the exchange value of the dollars. Their minimum wage is now above ours. You refuse to even consider it. What did one of your ministers say earlier on in the government? It was a big slip. He said, "We're not going to raise that until everybody else catches up with us." What that means is that you want to make sure you can legitimize paying workers who don't have benefit of a union the lowest possible wage that can be paid. But you talk about decent, well-paying jobs.

Remember the cleaning staff that had a collective agreement that paid something close to decent, well-paying jobs? It wasn't an awful lot of money, as I recall, but it was above your minimum wage. You eliminated their union; you eliminated their collective agreement security. It was virtually privatized or went to another organization. In fact, we brought in legislation to prevent that sort of thing from happening. Even though it had been the practice, we codified it and put it in law. You took it out. The people who go around and clean up after you, who pick up the garbage on the floor and wipe your desks, the very people who work in these precincts, these buildings, you lowered their wages by almost half. You did that. Every one of you who stood up and voted for that bill had a hand in cutting the quality of life of those workers, and then again, I say, you have the nerve to talk about opportunities of decent, well-paying jobs?

Employment standards, virtually the workers' bill of rights if you don't have the benefit of a collective agreement: You've taken away rights from workers in the Employment Standards Act. We proved that when we took it out across the province. You took away some of the rights of those workers who have no union, no protection except one piece of legislation. But you want us to believe that you care about decent, well-paying jobs.

And then there are scabs. We now have the blight again of scabs in this province. Those workers up at S.A. Armstrong are still on strike: almost two years on strike. Why? Because the company can bring in scabs. There are scabs brought across that picket line, that democratic picket line, every morning. Those workers watch someone go in and do their job and keep that company going.

What's the effect of that? The effect of that is to weaken the ability of those workers to negotiate a decent collective agreement and decent wages. That's what's happening, and you knew that. That's why you did it. You sent out a message to employers: "It's okay. Go after the unions, because we're going to back you up."

Maple Leaf Foods: Those workers lost almost half their wages. I say that was as much to do with the Harris government as it was with the owners of that company, because you sent out the message that it was okay to go after workers.

Mr Baird: Call the teachers' unions. Call the shareholders.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gary L. Leadston): The member for Nepean, order.

Mr Christopherson: Every other labour dispute in this province can be directly related back to the climate

that you set for relations, and it's only meant to weaken unions.

And now lucky construction workers. In your throne speech, they get the next pleasure of your legislative largess.

In closing, I want to read from the speech from the throne. It says, "To these Ontarians, a solemn pledge: Your government remembers." Let me tell you —

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much, member for Hamilton Centre.

Mr Christopherson: — Ontarians will remember too.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Northumberland.

Mr Galt: I was certainly entertained. I'd give that about a 5.9 for presentation.

Interjection: On the Richter scale.

Mr Galt: On the Richter scale.

The member for Hamilton Centre talks so passionately about the unions. I think that's very thoughtful when the unions were the ones that drove them out of office. He's able to overlook that and continue to pound away on labour laws for them. Meanwhile, they became their enemies and they drove them out. They just wouldn't understand what Bob Rae was trying to do to straighten out this economy.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): The social contract.

Mr Galt: The social contract. I didn't exactly agree with the social contract, but at least it was something to try and help the spiralling debt and the spiralling deficit. But you guys in cabinet and in caucus didn't want to support him.

You talked a lot about the environment. I've heard so often over in the ministry that this government, in the first year and a half, has done more for the environment to help it and improve it than the previous two governments did in 10 years. That's factual information.

What did your government do about waste energy incinerators? You banned them. Well, that's a pretty mature way of going about it. What did we do? We brought in the G-7 guidelines to look after them. They can be there. It's an alternative way of handling garbage after the three Rs. But no, your approach was to ban it.

What did this government do about regulations? We had a look at them. We streamlined them. We reorganized them. Now people can understand them and can follow them. They don't try to do end runs around the complicated set of regulations that you left when we took office. You had regulations that looked like the logs and the branches that are built into a beaver dam or into a beaver lodge, all twisted and caught and one on top of another; you go to remove one and it makes a whole mess of all of the others. That's the kind of regulations that you left piled one on top of another. We're straightening them out.

We put through an environmental assessment bill so that we could get on with business and protect the environment. But I heard your people say: "No, no. The way to protect the environment is to make it as complex and as

stupid as you possibly can so that nobody can understand."

And on it went, and on and on.

Mr Cullen: I'm pleased to follow in this debate and provide some comments on the member for Hamilton Centre's reply to the speech from the throne. He did touch upon a subject that we don't find in the speech from the throne, and that is the environment. I find it very curious.

Here we have a government going through extensive polling, extensive focus groups, trying to refine its message, trying to get back on track and delay the reconvening of this House because it found that it was falling in the polls. It found that the public did not like the way it was handling the major issues of the day: health care, education, child poverty, the environment.

2010

I note that the member for Hamilton Centre did dwell some time on the issue of the environment. Quite frankly, the points that he made are very telling points. This is indeed a government that has cut \$121 million from the Ministry of Environment. This is indeed a government that has gutted 42% of the budget for that particular ministry and has gutted environmental regulation, the enforcement of the people's will to protect the environment here in Ontario.

I am truly surprised, though, that the government turns its back on an issue that's so very important to the community. I know, coming from Ottawa-Carleton, we've gone through an official plan review exercise. We went and spoke to the people, we employed professional pollsters, and we found that a top-of-mind issue. Protecting the environment, preserving green space, was a major issue. You talk to the average voter and they want to make sure their government is fighting to protect the public interest so that we can live in a clean, healthy world.

We don't see this in the speech from the throne, one of the glaring omissions in the speech from the throne. Why is this? Because even this government can't face the fact that it has taken so much away from the environment. Why? To fund an income tax cut. It's wrong.

Mr Silipo: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to comment on the presentation made by my colleague from Hamilton West. I think his presentation demonstrated clearly why he has been and continues to be for our caucus a very strong and vocal advocate for working people across the province and certainly in his own community of Hamilton.

I know, time being short, he focused in his comments very much on what was happening with respect to the environment, again particularly as it relates to his own community in Hamilton and the issue he has raised time after time in this House, which is the aftermath of the fire in the Plastimet plant in Hamilton and the fact that the Environmental Commissioner has denounced the actions that this government has taken, or rather the lack of action, in this case, that this government has taken on this and on many other issues.

He used this very good example to point out how the government in the throne speech says one thing and the reality out there is completely the opposite. He talked about that in the context of the environmental issue, in the context of regulations that don't exist any more, workers who don't exist any more to enforce those regulations.

He talked also of course about the ongoing attack on working people that Mike Harris and his government will continue, not only the damage they have done through Bill 7 and through all of the other anti-labour legislation, but the damage that's yet to come with the attack now on people in the construction industry.

I know that had the member had more time, he would have been able to expand on those issues and talk about some of the other issues, whether it's education or health care or whether in fact it's the alternative view of the world that we in the New Democratic Party are beginning to put forward, which is that services like health care and environmental protection require support and require public dollars at the end of the day for that support to mean something of a real nature.

Mr Baird: I listened with great interest to the speech by my colleague the member for Hamilton Centre. He went on about the changes in labour relations that this government introduced. But if you look at the record of what was actually contained in Bill 7, it has provided some balance and stability to labour relations in the province, which has been very central to job creation. We had skewed the balance from the very delicate balance that existed for many years, and that has been central to sending out a message around the world that the province of Ontario is once again open for business.

This member talks about labour relations and democracy. He actually did not agree with the concept, as we on this side of the House agreed, that workers should be able to have a secret ballot to make the choice themselves whether they did or did not want to join a union, whether they did or did not want to decertify a union, whether they did or did not want to accept a collective agreement. This government doesn't take a position on whether workers should be unionized or non-unionized. We believe that decision should rest with the workers themselves, that they are best equipped to make the decisions on that area within their own lives.

But while I may disagree with the honourable member, I do respect him. He certainly is a passionate voice for the concerns of the left in this place.

I disagree with him when he talks about the economy. You look at his statements about where the Ontario economy is going. We've seen in the province of Ontario that more jobs have been created in the last 12 months than in any other 12 months in our history. We've seen some phenomenal economic growth.

I look at one pre-budget submission we saw from Dr Sherry Cooper, with Nesbitt Burns. Her conclusion: "I believe we are on the right fiscal and economic track. The government has successfully broken the tax-and-spend patterns of the past decade and deserves high marks for doing so. What is left essentially is to stay the course of

deficit and debt reduction, a course that will undoubtedly enhance living standards for all Ontarians by providing stable income growth and job security."

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The member for Hamilton Centre has two minutes to respond.

Mr Christopherson: I thank my colleagues from Ottawa West, Dovercourt, Nepean and Northumberland.

With respect to the comments of the member for Ottawa West, I think it's important for us to understand that it's obviously not just the older communities like mine in Hamilton and Windsor and Sudbury, but even expanding suburban areas like Ottawa that are affected by your attack on environmental standards and rights in this province. I appreciate him pointing that out and adding that to the debate.

My colleague from Dovercourt — again, we've begun to talk about our alternatives, which we should at this point in the government's mandate. One of them is that we would love to run around and say: "There won't be any kind of tax increase at all. In fact, you can cut your way to success." But the fact of the matter is that the money has to come from somewhere. What we've said is that at the very least, those who got the biggest benefit from the tax scheme ought to be the ones who contribute back in to make sure there is enough money for the education system, for our health care system. That's not to say that we're going to hit the middle class; quite the opposite. We're going to hit those who are doing quite well by the system, and they can and should put the money forward to make sure that those systems are there for all of us.

The member for Nepean likes to bring out his stuff from back in the horror days when he was the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour and the secret ballot stuff. He knows bloody well that was something that was brought out by the Tories in the late 1940s, that was maintained through every government, the whole process of automatic certification through cards. You've just tried to spin that out. At this point I'm surprised you would even attempt it, given the cynicism that's out there about your labour agenda.

The member for Northumberland, when you say you talked to people in the ministry who are saying that you're so much better than we ever were in our whole time, do me a favour like you did with the rest of the throne speech: Name names.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member for Hamilton West.

Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West): I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to share my time with the member for High Park-Swansea.

The Acting Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

Mrs Ross: Before I begin, I think it was a slip of the tongue when the member for Dovercourt referred to Mr Christopherson as the member for Hamilton West. I just wanted to clarify that in fact I'm proud to be the member for Hamilton West and to serve that riding.

Today I'm rising in support of the very positive messages that were laid out in the throne speech delivered last Thursday.

Three years ago our province, which was once the engine that drove the economy of Canada, teetered on the edge of bankruptcy. Its international credit rating had been downgraded because of the careless mismanagement of the previous two governments.

Today, thanks to the sound and responsible policies which were laid out in the Common Sense Revolution and the courageous leadership of Premier Mike Harris, Ontario's future is once again bright and continues to improve. Our economy is flourishing. Consumers are spending, builders are building, businesses are profitable once again and are hiring, and the welfare rolls are shrinking.

As the throne speech pointed out, Ontario has the fastest job creation rate in Canada. This is something we should all be very proud of. Since September 1995, there have been 341,000 new jobs created by Ontario's private sector. People are coming back to Ontario because Ontario is coming back for them.

2020

Indeed, I have seen evidence of Ontario's reinvigorated economy in my own riding of Hamilton West. Perhaps the members of the Legislature won't have seen the Hamilton Spectator, because unfortunately good news in Hamilton doesn't spread to Toronto, but this is the business section —

Mr Christopherson: Is that a picture of me and Howie? Ours was on A3. Where's yours?

Mrs Ross: This is the business section of the Wednesday, April 22, paper. Perhaps the member for Hamilton Centre didn't see this, because it's good news. There is a great picture of Hamilton, the community we're all proud of.

The headline says: "We're Tops For Business." "Hamilton Outranks Toronto, Ottawa for Best City in Ontario." The article goes on to say:

"Hamilton is the best place among six major cities studied in Ontario for doing business...."

"The ranking is highlighted in a breakdown of a study done for the Ontario government by professional services firm KPMG last fall...."

"When all costs used in the survey model were tallied up and indexed out..., Hamilton's rating...is the lowest of the Ontario cities surveyed."

I'm very proud of the accomplishments seen in my community of Hamilton and I think we should all be very proud. To those of us in Hamilton who feel tremendous pride in our community, this news doesn't come as a big surprise. But as proud as I am of Hamilton and of the people of Hamilton, the good news isn't only in Hamilton. In a recent study conducted by the Fraser Institute to determine which provinces possess the best investment climate and the best conditions to foster economic growth, Ontario finished at the top of the list, garnering 81% positive responses in the survey.

The article states: "Money managers indicated that taxation policy and government finances were the principal reasons. In addition, respondents highlighted Ontario's more flexible labour legislation as a positive contribution to the province's success." So not only are we proud, but other people in Ontario are very proud of what's going on in this province.

One of the keys to success for any economy is an educated workforce. For too long, Ontario's students obtained results that were only adequate or mediocre in comparison to other parts of the world. Our government finds this unacceptable. We have committed to the goal of excellence when it comes to educating Ontario's students. With the new funding formula recently announced, our education system will be able to focus on the classroom. Technology, standardized testing and the recognition of excellence by students and teachers are all key components to improving the system.

This government is committed to children. That is why the Honourable Margaret Marland, minister responsible for children, will be working with Dr Fraser Mustard, world-renowned expert, to conduct a study of early learning in order to make recommendations on how to best prepare our children for a lifetime of learning.

A successful province must also be a healthy province. That is why this government has increased health care funding to its highest level in history. In fact, contrary to what the opposition would have you believe, we have not cut health care. We are spending more than any other government in the history of this province. Indeed, that is something we should all be proud of as well.

When this government took office, our health care system was in desperate need of restructuring. Experts in the field knew that and commented on that as well. We knew it was going to be a big job and we knew it was going to be tough and that not everyone was going to be happy. But most important, we knew that to ensure its future existence we had to make changes to the health care system. This government has heard the concerns of the people of this province and is responding accordingly. This government is committed to new funding for more long-term-care facilities, new increases in community and home care funding and even more consideration in funding for seniors and other members of our rapidly aging society.

That is why today's announcement by the Minister of Health of a \$1.2-billion commitment to improve long-term care, the first announcement of new long-term-care beds since 1988, is further evidence of our government's commitment to respond to a health care system that will be there for everyone in Ontario when they need it at every stage of their lives, as the health minister has stated. All of these initiatives are indications of the early benefits our citizens will receive from a more efficient and restructured health care system.

Ontario's recovery is all about change, not just change for the sake of change but responsible change, change for the better, change for the future. The changes this government has made ensure that the essential services

which Ontarians depend on will be around for generations to come.

Cutting taxes to create jobs; cutting red tape to let business do what it does best, red tape that existed 30 years ago that should have been changed a long time ago; making welfare work for people by putting recipients into the workforce, where they want to be; making our communities safe; refocusing our education system by putting more money in the classroom, where it belongs; and restructuring our health care system to better serve Ontario's sick and elderly — these are all changes that help make Ontario great.

Change is never easy. As a matter of fact, it's really quite difficult. But we have all heard the people of Ontario, and we are listening. This government cares about the citizens of this province and their future. If there is one message the people of Ontario should take from last week's throne speech, it is not the negative diatribe you're hearing from the opposition but the positive commitment this government is making to Ontario to make it the best place in the world to live. The future holds great promise, not just for our young people but indeed for all Ontarians across the province. I'm proud to be a member of this government, with the throne speech that was announced last week.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for High Park-Swansea.

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): I am not at all surprised that my colleague has given such a comprehensive overview of the speech from the throne. Her comments are always insightful and they're always offered with pinpoint accuracy. I am pleased to lend my comments to hers today. In fact, I'm pleased she made some particular reference to the health care announcements that have been made recently.

Indeed, I suppose I have been provoked to make an intervention this evening, because just a matter of a few hours ago one of the members in this chamber, the member for York South, perhaps spread a series of inaccuracies and distortions that he might not have been aware of. He may well find himself being driven from his riding to another, trying to seek other places to hang his hat. I wish he'd get his facts accurate, however. He began to speak, for example, about something I've been working on for at least five or eight years, and I speak of Runnymede hospital. I'm glad the member for Hamilton West spoke about chronic care and the announcement made today with some passion.

I want to pause on that point, because I think some accuracy has to be brought into the debate today. Let me use Runnymede hospital as a case in point. It was the Liberal government of the day, under a Premier by the name of Peterson, who said to the people of High Park-Swansea, who had brought to his attention the urgent need for a new health care facility for chronic care, that if the people of High Park-Swansea would raise \$10 million, the government of the day would match \$20 million and a new facility would be built. That was a promise.

I listened today with more than a little aggravation and annoyance to the member for York South begin to suggest that this government has given too little too late and is not caring for the patients in Runnymede hospital. I found that offensive in the extreme. The fact is that if that member's party had really cared they would have provided a new facility more than 10 years ago, and the people he was pleading for today would have been housed, along with their families, in facilities they rightfully deserve. They would have been in those facilities 10 years ago, because the people of High Park-Swansea took up the challenge and raised \$10 million and the government of the day didn't honour its commitment. They didn't honour the commitment. Now, is that bad enough?

Let me tell you, that isn't the end of the story. The next government came in, and the next government perpetuated that promise. It said: "Not a problem. You've got the \$10 million. We'll have the \$20 million. You'll have a new facility." In that very difficult facility, for many years the finest medical and nursing staff have struggled to give the finest kind of health care you could think of while that government also turned its back upon the people of High Park-Swansea and said, "Well, not now," and then they hid behind the health care restructuring study they had set up. The people of High Park-Swansea saw through that façade.

2030

I'm holding the Minister of Health accountable to the promises of that Liberal government and of the NDP government. I want to make it very clear, because I want the people in that community and I want the patients of that community to have the facility they rightfully deserve. I want to see a new facility built on that site for the chronic care patients, for the long-term-care patients who require decent care.

I don't want to hear men and women of this Legislative Assembly using names to embarrass patients unnecessarily and to create fearmongering among patients and staff when in fact they know that this announcement by the minister today and by this government holds out tremendous hope that for the first time we are about to see the long-term-care needs of this province addressed effectively.

I won't put up with that kind of nonsense being spewed forth into this chamber. I will not allow any member of this chamber, my party or any other party, to upset any patients or their families unnecessarily and unfairly. In fact, the statements that were made in this House were simply unfounded and should have been withdrawn.

The people of High Park-Swansea demand and expect a new facility for Runnymede hospital. I have every reason to believe that at least this government, of all governments of the past, will in fact honour commitments made by former governments, and I appreciate that. In fact, I will hold their feet to the coals to make that happen.

I expect to see a new facility emerge on the site of Runnymede hospital and I expect to see our patients receiving the kind of care they richly deserve. I expect to see the medical and nursing staff working in facilities that

they rightfully deserve to work in. I expect to see the right kind of treatment for our patients who are suffering from MS and Huntington's, receiving the kind of care they must have, and I expect that the announcement made today by the government holds out the finest hope we have seen in more than a decade in this province.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Cullen: I'm pleased to rise in response to comments made by the member for Hamilton West and the member for High Park-Swansea.

Listening to the comments of the member for Hamilton West, she's clearly a defender of the government and believes that all is well in Lotusland. The reality is that out there in Mike Harris's Ontario, many people are suffering from the impact of this government's policies, and these are policies that I'm not so sure I'd be so proud to have continue. But this government has said in its speech from the throne that it intends to stay the course, which means that in a deficit situation where it's going to come in with another income tax cut, we can expect more cuts to the programs that Ontarians want in their hospitals, in their health care, in their schools.

I was more than taken by the comments of the member for High Park-Swansea, who takes great umbrage about the use of names less than a week after we had a speech from the throne where this government threw out people's names left, right and centre. Lo and behold, a minister of the crown had to resign his post because of the inadvertent illegal use of a name. To hear a member of the government side say that the member for York South should not be doing so, when the member for York South has permission, is absolutely astounding.

Further, the member for High Park-Swansea talks about the new announcement for long-term care. I am absolutely amazed that he is hoping Runnymede hospital may be the beneficiary of this. Let us remember that what the government has announced is 20,000 beds over eight years and today there are 18,000 people waiting for those beds. Some of those people waiting for those beds will not live to use them. Why is this government so slow in reacting to the need out there? Why is this government taking so much money away from our health care system and then spending eight years to put it back in?

Mr Christopherson: I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the comments of the member for Hamilton West. Three quick things: One, the member talked proudly about the article in the Hamilton Spectator that spoke to the benefits of investing in Hamilton and what a great place that is to invest and then proceeded to take credit for it. I would strongly suggest that she ask the mayor of the city of Hamilton and the council members how they feel this government has contributed to any benefit in our community and just how much damage, in reality, they've really done.

Second, she spent a lot of time talking about health and spoke to the concerns that she and this government have about health. Yet when it comes to the health and safety of workers, you have to ask yourself, where is the caring? I'd like to point out another Hamilton Spectator article in

today's paper. The heading is "Day of Mourning Draws Attention to Workers' Deaths on the Job." There is a picture of my leader Howard Hampton and myself, who were there at the ceremony. More important, there were no other MPPs there. We have four Tory MPPs. If they care so much about health, why weren't they there to pay their respects to those workers who have died or were injured on the job? Isn't that health care too?

Last, she talked about the courageous leadership of Mike Harris. When it comes to Plastimet, I'd like to know whether she continues to support the courageous leadership of Mike Harris and their environment minister in refusing to call a public inquiry, or whether she disagrees and admits she's ineffective as a government member in getting out the best interests of Hamilton. Either way, that's not good enough for Hamilton.

Mr Gilchrist: I'm pleased to rise and give a couple of minutes' comment in response to the speech made by both the member for Hamilton West and the member for High Park-Swansea who again, as is appropriate in this debate, spoke to the throne speech itself, spoke to the content of that important document, spoke to the direction the province of Ontario is going to take and didn't get sidetracked on personal issues that are great for grandstanding, and particularly, unlike the last Liberal member, didn't go down the road of committing an unparliamentary act by accusing another member of committing an illegal act in here. He should be ashamed of himself.

The fact of the matter is that the throne speech was an important document. I'm quite intrigued that the members opposite are spending so much time talking about issues that aren't in that document. They can't find it within themselves to criticize the important numbers in there, numbers such as 341,000 net new full-time jobs, numbers like 250,000 people who have been taken off dependency on the welfare system. Imagine that, a quarter of a million people who now have a more prosperous outlook in their life, a prosperous outlook for their family. In fact, in some places, like Peel region, the welfare rolls have dropped by 50% in just three years. That's what the throne speech had to say, but that's not what they're commenting on over here.

They don't dare comment on that, because they'd have to agree that everything that has happened in the economy of Ontario in the last three years has been in a positive direction. We've got economists like Sherry Cooper saying they support the government's move to reduce the tax burden on households and small business. Just last week the leader of the third party came out and said that the tax cuts don't help anybody earning less than \$80,000. Well, I hate to burst your bubble. One day later, on our panel on the same radio station, Frances Lankin had to retract that and said her own leader was not telling the truth.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): It's a pleasure for me to rise and respond to the honourable member for Hamilton West. She referred in her speech to job creation. Let me tell you one thing. We have to look at the interest rate side too, because without having the

federal Liberals in power, probably wouldn't we have as many jobs created as we have.

Second, in the speech we referred to Quebec construction issues. She referred to job creation. The minister today made an announcement of building new homes or renovation of nursing homes, referring to create 42,500 jobs. I wonder how many of those jobs are going to be for Ontario residents. If you look at the Ottawa-Hull area, 58% of the jobs that were created in the construction field in the last three years have been fulfilled by Quebec residents. This government has done nothing about it. When I say it has done nothing about it, on December 6, 1996, we signed an agreement but the agreement — I remember the newspaper got back to me. They said, "Jean-Marc, you don't answer to this?" I said, "No, there's nothing in this."

2040

This company Mirtech from Oakville was the lowest bidder on some of the work to be done in Hull — 2,000 in Hull and 2,000 in Vanier. They were the lowest bidder by \$183,000. This government said they made an agreement with Quebec that you don't have to have an office in Quebec, but because Mirtech did not have an office in Quebec, they were disqualified three months after.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The member's time has expired. The member for Hamilton West has two minutes to respond.

Mrs Ross: I want to thank the members for Ottawa West, Prescott and Russell, Scarborough East and Hamilton Centre for their comments. I focused on the throne speech because it was a very positive message. I focused on this article in the Hamilton Spectator because I'm aware that this kind of good news doesn't get to Toronto and I wanted to make people understand that Hamilton is a viable, living, growing, developing community and I'm proud to be a member of that community.

I think our government should take credit for these things that are happening in Ontario. It's our pro-growth, pro-jobs policies that are causing Ontario to create more jobs than any other province in this country so we should be proud of that.

I want to tell you about things that are happening in Hamilton, and the member for Hamilton Centre never speaks about this. The lowest unemployment rate across this country is consistent in Hamilton. We should be proud of that. We should be blowing our horn about it.

Mr Christopherson: No thanks to you.

Mrs Ross: Yes, thanks to us, because of our good policies that are bringing people to Ontario.

Let me tell you about some of the things that are happening in Hamilton. I was proud to take the Minister of Labour to a small business in Hamilton called Advanced Welding. The owner there, Mr Ken Tucker, trains people. He listens to industries, goes out to industries, speaks to industries, finds out what their needs are and he comes back and trains people, getting good jobs paying well over minimum wage, \$80,000 jobs. A man from Czechoslovakia just found a job out of Advanced Welding. Those are

the kinds of things that Hamiltonians do to provide jobs to people in our country, and I'm darned proud of it.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gravelle: Thank you to my colleagues for being so kind. I'm very glad to join the debate in response to the speech from the throne. It will give me an opportunity to talk about a number of things that the government members seem to want to avoid talking about.

I think what ultimately is most interesting about the speech from the throne is what's not in it. There's a lot that's not in it, and I think it's certainly understandable that the government members would want to trumpet their spin on the speech from the throne, but they really are in a state of denial. One of the conclusions I reached not that long ago — I've been hoping that this government, like all governments, would recognize that some of the things they are doing are truly hurting people and that they need to stop those things that are hurting people. I was hoping they would turn around and change their approach, but I've come very much to the conclusion that ultimately this is a government that in essence is irritated by the responsibilities of government. They don't want to be a government that is responsible for the health care of all the people of this province. They don't want to be responsible for the education system and all that entails. In fact they are irritated by the process. They simply find it an onerous and, as I said, irritating process.

I believe what they've misunderstood is that in many cases that is truly what the purpose of government is. The purpose of government is to care about people, to look after the concerns of all the people of this province. It's very, very clear when one looks at the approach this government has taken that that is not the way they view it at all. I feel proud to say that indeed I believe that is the purpose of government. It is to represent the interests of all the people and to care about all the people, and I believe that a good government can do that. You do that by recognizing that it's people who have to come first. It's not just the bottom line; it's people who must come first. That's where you set your priorities.

As I said, there are a number of things in the speech from the throne that aren't there. They simply aren't there. We certainly know that, in terms of the health care field, we haven't heard any of the government members talking about the fact that 32 hospitals have closed or are closing, the fact that there are now user fees being paid by seniors that should not have been paid, especially when Mike Harris made it very clear there would be no new user fees, let alone the fact he made it very, very clear that he had no intention of closing any hospitals. We know what's happened there.

We've seen what's happened with Bill 26, which formed the Health Services Restructuring Commission. We've seen what has happened with that: a government trying to avoid its responsibilities for the health care system by trying to put together an arm's-length organization, which is by no means at arm's length. We've seen what's happened with that and we've seen how much it has hurt people.

I think every one of us in this House has talked to constituents, regardless of what party we're from, who have been very, very hurt by the enormous and the devastating cuts to the health care system. We know what's happened in terms of the number of acute care beds that have been cut from our hospitals. It seems to me that these are aspects of the reality of governing this government should not be allowed to ignore and should not be allowed to forget about.

With the limited amount of time that I have tonight, I want to talk about a number of areas. What bothered me most significantly was — despite the government's approach in the speech from the throne which, in essence, was nothing but an exercise in public relations puffery — there were some very important elements left out. In the area of health care, it was startling to me, and I think significant, that there was no mention of mental health care, absolutely no mention.

We know that as a result of what has happened with the deconstruction commission a number of psychiatric hospitals are going to be closed in this province if they get their way. One of the psychiatric hospitals is in Thunder Bay. As we also know, the number of available psychiatric hospital beds has been cut. We also know that, as a result of that, in many parts of the province it's very, very difficult to retain and keep a lot of the doctors and many of the psychiatrists that we need to maintain a certain level of health care.

I can speak about the situation in Thunder Bay, not too much from a position of authority but from a relatively informed position, for a number of reasons. It's very upsetting to watch what's happening. It makes one think, based on this government's behaviour, that they simply don't want to deal with what they believe to be people who are not in the mainstream of society. People with mental health problems deserve to have help and have health care in exactly the same manner.

In Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario, because of the fact that we have a reduced number of psychiatric beds and because those beds are often completely full and because we do not have an emergency shelter or a psychiatric shelter for people for overnight purposes for those who need to be protected or detained, what has happened in northwestern Ontario is that ultimately many people who need that protection or help are put into the district jail. In this province, it's extraordinary to think that we cannot provide the level of care that we need so that those people who need that care and need protection, need help that night, are not able to be put into a facility and receive the help they deserve. That, to me, is a mark that this government should at least acknowledge and recognize.

I know that the Minister of Health has undertaken a review of the mental health care system and I acknowledge that. I'm glad she has done so. But it's important to state that she needs to recognize that the review must also take in how one deals with the situation right now. There is a crisis in the mental health care area right now in the provision of mental health services.

If my information is correct — and I could stand corrected — the review will focus on how they can continue the process of deinstitutionalization. Perhaps those on the government bench, their back bench, will correct me if I'm wrong, but I understand that is the approach that's being taken.

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Although one certainly cannot argue against more community supports being in place and allowing people to have an opportunity to be in the community and to work in the community, and deinstitutionalization itself is a laudable concept, it needs to be understood extremely clearly that unless those community supports are in place, we do not now have the facilities to look after the people who need the help right now. As a result of that, we've got these tragic circumstances that are taking place. It's just not fair to anyone, and I would hope the minister would take that seriously.

There are a variety of other areas that I want to talk about. That is one that certainly is missing. There are some other notable gaps in the throne speech. In 1995, Mike Harris promised the disabled community that he would bring forward legislation to proclaim an Ontarians with Disabilities Act. It was a promise that was made, it's a promise that was put in writing and it's a promise that has not been kept.

It's truly astonishing to me, and may I say that since that has happened, since the government has come into power, there has been a private member's bill put forward by the member for London Centre which was calling for the government to move forward on its Ontarians with Disabilities Act. It was supported by all three parties in this Legislature and by a vote, I believe, of 57 to zero. I think that indicates that indeed the government members also agree that we should be bringing forward that piece of legislation.

I would hope the government members would accept their obligation and try and persuade the minister responsible and the Premier to bring forward that legislation. It was a promise made. One presumes it was made seriously. One doesn't need to be cynical about it, but I hope it wasn't done simply to garner votes. I would like to believe that it was the case, but it certainly is alarming to see that it was not in the throne speech because one recognizes this may indeed be the last throne speech before an election campaign. I would certainly hope that the fact that it's not in the throne speech isn't the end of the story, but it makes one worry about it.

I know that before the throne speech the Ontarians with Disabilities Act committee put together a brief. They decided that they really wanted to help the government at least put forward legislation and they put together a brief that brought forward a number of the areas they thought needed to come forward. They invited the Premier and they invited the minister responsible for disability issues to meet them at Queen's Park, and the Premier and the minister did not show up, which was again unfortunate and again sent a wrong signal or a bad signal. I would really hope again that the members on the government side

would encourage the Premier and the minister to not let this one go. This is important and I think it's one that absolutely should be in place. I would hope that it is not a death knell, but again it was something that was missing in the throne speech. If it's not in the throne speech, I don't think one tends to expect it to be brought forward, but we are strongly hopeful that it still will be and that's the approach that I will take.

Again, it's a question only of which areas we sort of discuss in terms of what's in there and what's not in there. Certainly it was interesting in the throne speech — I mean there was always a great amount of bragging in the Legislature by the government members about the number of people they've managed to kick off welfare or social assistance. There's always a great pride in terms of what they view as the fiscal reality, although I don't know if there should be a great deal of pride in that one. Indeed, the debt in the province is going to be increasing by at least \$20 billion as a result of their desire to continue on with the tax cut.

But I think it's important to recognize that the legislation that has created Ontario Works and the Ontario disability support program deserves some discussion in this Legislature. The regulations for Bill 142, which created Ontario Works, have just come out and in fact have just come into effect as of May 1, as I think everyone knows. This is an unusual sort of process. There was great urgency, it seems, to pass this legislation, but then there was an enormous delay before the regulations were brought into place. Mind you, we discovered to some degree why that was the case because the regulations themselves are in many cases punitive and very, very cruel and make it very, very clear this government truly is far more comfortable in essence attacking those people who are on social assistance than they are caring about how they really can help them get back into the workplace.

It's really quite extraordinary. We certainly know the Premier's quote about the \$37 allowance for women who are pregnant being cut off because he was afraid it would be used for beer. It was incredibly offensive and it was unkind and it was cruel. Indeed, it's extraordinarily important that we do whatever we can to help people in that position.

Some of the regulations are really pretty interesting and seem strange to me. The new rules say that the monetary value of goods and services received is included as income. That's help from family and friends, the value of food or meals provided, and any bartering done between recipients must legally be reported and deducted from the allowance. If two mothers trade babysitting services, they should each have the value of that deducted from their assistance. That seems to me to be a pretty strange and, again, a punitive kind of thing to be putting in there, especially when the first act this government essentially did in 1995 when they were elected was to cut 21.6% from the social assistance benefits. His commitment at the time was that people would be able to rely on help from family and the community. Again, that just seems punitive.

We also know that the people who are being asked to administer these new regulations are finding them very difficult to administer. They need to be protected themselves because they're working within the system. But I can tell you, I've spoken to people — and I won't say where, because we've got into an environment now where we actually worry that if people speak up they will be punished or intimidated by this government — but I have spoken to people who work within the system who are finding this extraordinarily upsetting because they think it's very cruel.

The system seems to be based on the fact that people are cheating rather than the fact that this is a system that's supposed to help people. I know that is something that is bothering a great number of them. Shirley Hoy in Toronto has spoken about the difficulties of regulation, so I don't think it's inappropriate that I should use her name. But there are a number of things that seem in essence to be in contradiction to what the proclaimed goal of the legislation is.

Quite literally, if they have a vehicle that's worth \$5,000, that they will have to sell the vehicle in order to be able to receive assistance seems to be one of those contradictions. Here we want to help people so they have an opportunity to go and look for work and find work, yet we're going to actually force people who have a vehicle worth a certain amount, over \$5,000, to get rid of that vehicle in order to receive assistance. It seems like a contradiction to me. If someone can explain to me why that one is okay, I would be curious about that. These kinds of regulations are set up simply, it seems to me, to absolutely attack those people who really should be just the ones we most want to be able to help.

There are other aspects of it, but I see my time is running low. Certainly the eligibility review officers, who essentially are those who have the authority to go and search out the private lives of people on social assistance, again seem to be set up ultimately to presume that people are doing something wrong rather than presuming that they're trying their very best to survive in the system.

I'm startled to see that my time is so quickly coming to an end, but there are a couple of other things I'd like to mention quickly. The government has a very interesting way, a sort of sneaky way, it seems to me, of gathering revenue. One of the more interesting ones, and it hasn't received a great deal of publicity, is that early this year the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, who was then in charge of the gaming activities, put through a regulation which insisted that charitable organizations and volunteer groups that use break-open tickets were suddenly to be charged a 5% fee for every box of break-open tickets that they sold.

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Mr Crozier: Sounds like a tax grab to me.

Mr Gravelle: Thank you very much for saying that. I thank the member for Essex South, because that's exactly what it is — it's a tax grab. I'm sure you've all heard about this. I'll tell you something: I ended up dealing with about 50 agencies in Thunder Bay, and they were all quite

horrified by this. This 5% tax grab apparently is for administrative information gathering.

Interjection.

Mr Gravelle: You can be as rude as you want over there, but the fact is that you've got the Royal Canadian Legion, an organization that relies on the break-open tickets in order to pay its mortgage on its building on Van Norman Street, basically losing revenue as a result of this. You've got this government telling them, "You've got to pay \$84, or 5%, on every box of break-open tickets," for no discernible reason at all. It is simply a tax grab, and it's in the millions of dollars.

There are 151 groups in Thunder Bay that were suddenly startled by this. Again, what was interesting about it was that it just simply came upon them suddenly. It was just part of the regulations. That was pretty horrifying. It is pretty horrifying.

I've had an extraordinary response. I've certainly tried to get the minister to see it. But again, it's almost like you don't want to connect yourself to the reality of what's really going on out there.

Here are organizations that are struggling in an environment where it's more and more difficult to raise funds, that are doing their very best to be the volunteers that you want them to be and we all support them for being, yet you're taking money from them as they raise it. You're taking it, and it truly is a tax grab.

I've never seen any explanation for that, and again, if you could find one, I'm sure every one of the groups in Thunder Bay that's negatively affected by this would sure like to hear about it. If there are 151 groups in Thunder Bay, Ontario — where I'm proud to be from — there are thousands across the province, obviously. So there's millions of dollars being taken from these groups. That wasn't in the throne speech. Why didn't you talk about that in the throne speech? No, no. You just want to talk about your spin.

The throne speech was essentially an extraordinary example of public relations puffery, and it was offensive. I sat here and listened to the words that were written by the Premier and his office, talking about their concern about patients, their concern about people in emergency hallways, and thought to myself, "Isn't this just extraordinary?" Here's the government that, by its drastic cuts in the system, has caused these problems. This is why we're all getting phone calls from people who just cannot receive the care they deserve. Yet this government has the gall to stand up there and deliver a speech that says, "We care, and we're worried about people in this province as patients."

People aren't going to buy it. They're not going to be fooled by it, but they have every right to be offended by it.

It's extraordinary to me that we can sit here tonight and have to listen to you deliver all your speeches without any recognition of those realities, because those are the realities that are affecting people in this province. I'll tell you something: they deserve much better.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Silipo: I think the member for Port Arthur used, in the latter part of his speech, the phrase "public relations puffery." I believe those were his words. I think that is a very accurate three-word summary of the throne speech. I want to congratulate the member for Port Arthur for, in his usual very straightforward approach, analysing the speech and talking about a number of the things that were in the throne speech and some things that were not in the throne speech. Among other things, he talked about the lack of commitment of the Harris government to implementing — as they promised they would do in the election, as they promised since the election they would do — an Ontarians with Disabilities Act. He talked about the continuing attack on people on welfare. I have to say to him, on those issues and on a number of other points he made, that I very much agree with him and with the take he has made on the throne speech.

I would like, as I did with his other Liberal colleague before him, because this is questions and comments, to actually ask him a question, and I hope he will try to answer it. I think he would agree with me that part of the responsibility, particularly in this particular time frame, of those of us who sit on the opposition benches is, yes, to continue criticizing what the government of the day is doing — in this case, the Mike Harris government, and there's no shortage of things for us to criticize — but also to begin to talk to people about what we would do differently.

It's easy enough, I think, as you listen to most people, for people to say to us, and justifiably so, "Well, what would you guys do instead?" I know the Liberal Party, as has the NDP, has also talked about reinvesting in various services — health care, education — but the bottom line comes down to how we are going to pay for this. I know the position his leader has taken is that just the growth in the economy will be sufficient to pay for those things. I don't think it's going to be sufficient to do the kind of serious investment they say they want to do and we believe we want to make in education, social services and health care.

Mr Carroll: It's always a pleasure to stand and make some comments based on a speech from the member for Port Arthur. I had an opportunity to visit his community in the last little while. They speak very highly of you up there. I just wanted to pass that along to you.

But you know, in the true form of a Liberal, the member for Port Arthur criticizes and offers no alternatives. He criticizes the fact that the regulations surrounding the new Ontario Works program put a limit on an automobile that somebody can own at \$5,000. I'm not so sure, when he criticizes that, whether he thinks somebody who comes to the system and asks for welfare should be allowed to have a \$25,000 car or a \$35,000 car. He just says that they shouldn't be allowed to have just a \$5,000 car. It's easy for him to criticize.

He also talks about the fact that we have not yet delivered on our commitment to have an Ontarians with Disabilities Act. It's interesting that the Liberals criticize us for living up to our commitment to reduce income tax.

They kept talking to us about not having the tax reduction. We'd say, "We promised it in the Common Sense Revolution," but, "No, you shouldn't have the tax reduction." But they've also said that they would not raise taxes if they got elected. They also are critical of us for balancing the budget in Ontario. Again, they think we should break that promise. But they're critical of us for not honouring the promise to have an Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

The Liberals tend to stand and criticize but, as the member of the third party said, they offer no alternatives; they just suggest that we should keep spending and spending and spending, be everything to everybody. In actual fact, I believe their leader has said he will use the surplus generated by our economic policies to finance their programs — not really fair.

Mr Crozier: I can't think of any reason why it isn't fair that we would use their surplus to pay for what we want. What's unfair about that?

The member for Chatham-Kent talks about cars. It's my understanding that he spent most of his adult and business life trying to convince people who were driving cars that were worth \$5,000 or less that they should buy one that's worth more. Nobody said they should be driving \$25,000 or \$35,000 cars. In fact, that's rather a ridiculous statement. I doubt very much that anyone who's on social assistance is driving a car worth \$25,000 or \$35,000.

The point is, what relationship does that have to the person's need? What the member for Chatham-Kent would rather have them do — and I suspect the individual's business wouldn't agree with him — is drive a car that's worth less than \$5,000, that probably costs more to maintain than the car is worth, probably costs more to insure than the car is worth, pollutes the environment — but then the environment minister doesn't matter, because he's not going to put any emission standards in place, even though the Premier criticized him for not having done that.

The member for Port Arthur speaks how he feels. It's rather strange — you learn a lot of good things about people in this Legislature, and when they get in here, they seem to speak differently. I'll tell you this: The member for Port Arthur, Mike Gravelle, speaks the same way outside this Legislature as he speaks inside.

Mr Christopherson: I want to compliment the member for Port Arthur. In the very short period of time that he has been in this place, he has established himself as a very caring, articulate speaker for his community. It's my sense that whenever he rises in this place, the vast majority of colleagues in all parties listen, because he has something to say.

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I want to pick up on his comments about the government's tax cut and the debt. It's interesting that reported in today's paper and released by the Ontario Alternative Budget Working Group — which of course is a group of people from a very different philosophical and political perspective than that of this government — using the government's own statistics, they put together a different vision of what Ontario could look like, how it

will be paid for and what the resulting economic impacts are.

I might say that more and more this is being done provincially and federally, and it's something people are looking at more and more, and because of the legitimate numbers they use, it's gaining in credibility. I think in time we'll see it start to get almost as much attention as the budget itself, because it clearly is a different view.

What they say very clearly, using the government's own numbers, is that if there hadn't been a tax cut, you wouldn't have needed to make any of the spending cuts you did. If you'd just left the spending where it was and not played to the greed factor in terms of giving so much money back to the very wealthy in our community, there would have been a balanced budget in this province a year before you project one. When we look at the fact that 50% of the population earns less than \$35,000 a year, this is an important message.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Port Arthur has two minutes to respond.

Mr Gravelle: I'd certainly like to thank all the members who spoke, the members for Dovercourt, Chatham-Kent, Hamilton Centre, and a special thank you to my colleague the member for Essex South.

It's interesting, just to respond to the member for Chatham-Kent, if I may, very shortly. The fact is that in terms of the car issue, the \$5,000, obviously there are certain circumstances where somebody may have received a car in a separation agreement and their circumstances are such that they now need social assistance. Should they be punished for that? Should they be told they must get rid of that car?

Mr Baird: Yes.

Mr Gravelle: Oh, I see. So, in other words, they've received it in their separation agreement, they're now on social assistance, they're caring for their family. This obviously shows your attitude towards it. This would obviously limit their ability to really get around.

The fact is, you asked about an alternative. I'll tell you an alternative. The alternative is to think of people first and really care about people. I honestly think the evidence of the last three years is that this is not the priority of this government. I think the evidence is overwhelming. It has really been quite bizarre to suddenly have a throne speech where you get this nicely spun message that basically wants everybody to forget about the past. "We weren't going to listen to you before. You know, I think we might start listening to you now."

Some of the legislation that's coming up, which is obviously based on, "Gee, we want to listen to you," I don't know why you think people are going to particularly believe that. The fact is that this has been a government whose hallmark will be, "We don't listen to you; we just do what we're going to do." You like to think you are doing what you said you'd do; the fact is that you've broken a number of crucial promises that people will not forget. It seems to me that your motives are clear, and our priority is people.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Silipo: I realize, the time remaining in this sitting being what it is, that members, particularly those opposite, may not get the opportunity to respond or reply to anything I might say. If any of them are really disappointed in that, I invite them to come back tomorrow afternoon, when I will try to complete my comments.

Let me just make a couple of observations in the little time that is left before we adjourn. As I listened to the throne speech the other day, there were a couple of interesting and contradictory messages that I think were in the speech, certainly that I heard and that many others have observed. There was, on the one hand, this effort that Mike Harris and company were making to try to soften their image. They knew that the polls were telling them that in fact one of the weaknesses they have is that they are perceived as not listening, they are perceived as uncaring, they are perceived as not responding to what people are actually feeling out there, the fact that people are hurting, the fact that people are not happy with the nature, certainly, and the tone and the speed with which they're making change. So they wanted to very clearly set out a tone that said: "No, no. If we haven't listened before, we're listening now. If we haven't given you the sense that we were listening before, we are now."

There was a whole number of examples in the speech where there were actually individuals brought in — I'm assuming they were here because they agreed to be here, but whether they actually had had portions of the speech read to them so they knew what link was being made, I'm not sure. Just to give you one example, though there are many we could give, I wonder how the government could try to justify the link between praising the Olympic athletes who were here, which praise we would all agree with — how the Mike Harris government particularly could stand up and praise those Olympic athletes at the same time they have cut the underpinnings of the recreation and amateur sports programs that have helped to develop those very same athletes, which will make it much more difficult, if not impossible, for similar athletes to develop with the supports of their governments and of their communities.

That's but one example. If time allowed, I could go on and give you a number more, but we keep seeing that kind of juxtaposition, an attempt to try and give a softer, kinder, gentler face to the government against the reality of what the Mike Harris government has done. I want to talk a little about this in terms of the various areas in health care and social services, in education.

On the other hand — and here's a schism, contradiction, however you want to put it — the government also tried to not move away from their tough-guy image, and I use those words very clearly, the tough-guy image they feel got them elected and I think to some extent got them elected: the attack on the poor, the attack on people on social assistance, the attack on unions, the attack on workers. You saw the same kind of messages that Mike Harris used in the last election campaign being used again: "We're getting tough. We're getting tough on fraud. We're getting tough on people on welfare." Those are

messages that pander to a certain section of our population. They were in the speech because Mike Harris knows he does not want to abandon the Reform side of his agenda and the Reform side of his support.

So we saw this interesting schism where, in their own speech, not only were the examples they used to try to give themselves a softer image completely contradicted by the reality of their actions, but then within the same speech also this kind of, "By the way, while we may be softer and kinder and gentler, we're still the tough guys."

I find that that kind of approach is really very reflective of the way in which Mike Harris and the Mike Harris government have behaved so far. There is no softening, because very little, if anything, that this government has done can be categorized as soft. Very much of what this government has done can be categorized as hurting people, hurting the average family out there. Whether they are among the poorest, whether they're qualifying for welfare — yes, it's true; the facts are undeniable. There are some 240,000 to 250,000 people who are no longer on the welfare rolls. That is a fact. But it is not a fact, at least it is not a fact as far as I'm concerned, that there are 250,000 people in this province who are better off today and as a result of that are off the welfare rolls of this province.

The Acting Speaker: Order. There are several conversations going on. I'd invite you to leave and have them elsewhere. They're not going to be happening here. We want to pay attention to the member for Dovercourt, and I invite him to carry on with his speech.

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Mr Silipo: I can tell you, as a former minister in that area, there are some 100,000 people who have historically hovered on the edge of qualifying for social assistance. Many of them were people with families who qualified nominally so they could maintain their support for the health benefits, and in fact some were getting partial support because they were working part-time and therefore had some income. All those people automatically dropped off the rolls when the tough guy, Mike Harris, changed the criteria for eligibility.

That tough-guy approach we saw reiterated in the speech from the throne, a reminder from Mike Harris that his colours haven't changed. The words maybe have changed, but the deeds have not changed. It seems that just when the government tries to put on a kinder, softer image, we hear or see the real Mike Harris.

Who can forget the events we saw transpire around this Legislature involving the Dionne sisters? Who can ever forget the turmoil that Mike Harris and his government put those Ontarians through? It speaks volumes about the kind of attitude and approach that the Premier of this province and his government take. Those things say a lot more than any words the Premier, Mike Harris, would ask the Lieutenant Governor to read in a speech from the throne.

Just in case people thought this was all a mistake and somehow we had all misunderstood, only days before the House reopens, in comes Mike Harris with another zinger about people on welfare and drinking beer. Again, it's that

kind of pandering, that kind of catering to the lowest sentiments that I find completely appalling. I would find that completely appalling from any member in this Legislature. I find it particularly appalling when those words come out of the mouth of the Premier of this province.

Like it or not, Mike Harris is the Premier of the province, until the next election at least. I would have thought that some two years into the mandate, he would have finally realized that while, yes, in his own calculation, he only needs 40%, 42% of the vote to get elected —

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): All you needed was 37%.

Mr Silipo: I'm not quibbling about that, I say to the Minister of Agriculture. The point I'm making is that even he should have realized by now that being the Premier of the province means that you are the Premier of the whole province, for all the people in the province, not just for that 38%, 40%, 42% or 45%.

What we have in Mike Harris and his government is an attempt to say, "No, we understand; we want to govern for the benefit of all," but at the end of the day what we get are their actions that tell us time and again that they govern for the benefit of a few.

My colleague from Hamilton Centre has already pointed out this evening that the underpinning of all of this, as we all know and as we've said time after time in this place, is the tax cut. I'm sure we will see in the budget next week the next and final instalment of that tax cut,

perhaps even sped up to show they are really serious about that. What they would like Ontarians to forget is the price people are paying out there for that tax cut.

Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand): Yes, they are getting jobs.

Mr Silipo: No, they're not getting jobs as a result of the tax cut. You don't have to take my word for it, I say to the members opposite. Take the word of many, many economists who have said to us and have said to you that it isn't the tax cut that is bringing about the creation of jobs across this province. In fact, what we are seeing is a situation where to pay for the tax cut, \$30 billion will be added to the debt by a government that wants to bring down the debt and the deficit.

The people who actually see a benefit from that are people who make well over \$100,000. They will be the ones who will see a real benefit. The rest of us, most Ontarians out there, will see a decrease in take-home pay at the end of the day when they calculate in all the other things they have to pay. And they will also see the loss of services in health care, in education, in social services, whether it's services for kids or services for people with developmental disabilities. In all the range of services, people are seeing, have seen and will continue to see real cuts, real deterioration in those services.

I would love to go on, Speaker, but I see we're at 9:30 and I will pick up the debate the next time we get the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker: It being 9:30, the House stands adjourned until 10 am tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 2127.

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Beaches-Woodbine	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)
Brampton North / -Nord	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Guelph	Elliott, Brenda (PC)
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St George-St David	Leach, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Yorkview	Sergio, Mario (L)
		York South / -Sud	Kennedy, Gerard (L)
		Nickel Belt	Vacant

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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of Ontario**

Second Session, 36th Parliament

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Deuxième session, 36^e législature

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of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 30 April 1998

Jeudi 30 avril 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 30 April 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 30 avril 1998

The House met at 0957.

Prayers.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (DRIVERS' LICENCES OF CERTAIN SCHOOL PUPILS), 1998

LOI DE 1998 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (PERMIS DE CONDUIRE DE CERTAINS ÉLÈVES)

Mr Wettlaufer moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 4, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to the drivers' licences of certain school pupils /
Projet de loi 4, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne le permis de conduire de certains élèves.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Pursuant to standing order 95(c)(i), the honourable member has 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): I'm very proud to be putting forward this amendment to the Highway Traffic Act. I am putting it forward for a number of reasons, one of which is not contained within the amendment itself but rather how the amendment was proposed, how it was developed. It was a concept which I can't take credit for. It's a concept that was a direct result of a parents' council meeting held in a high school in my area. It's an inner-city school. It is populated by 64, I believe, different nationalities speaking 41 different languages. It's Cameron Heights Collegiate Institute.

The suggestion originated in the form of a question. It was, if you will recall, the dispute, the concern surrounding Bill 160. It was a suggestion which originated in the form of a question along the lines of what our government would do to help keep students in the classroom. It was a good question: "What is the government going to do to help educators in the province who in many schools face truancy rates of up to 20%?"

The truancy rates, as a result of the research that I've done into various states and provinces in North America, have a direct relationship to the violence that we face in our communities today. It has a direct relationship to the drugs that we face in our communities today — drug use,

drug pushing. It has a direct relationship to poor driving. It has a direct relationship to underage liquor use. It has a direct relationship to juvenile delinquency.

I didn't have an immediate answer to that question, but I responded that I would be willing to look into it.

This amendment directly links the ability of students to obtain and maintain a driver's licence. The suggestion came from the principal of Cameron Heights Collegiate, Mr Dick Beresford.

Since that parents' council meeting, I took part in a number of other meetings to discuss the proposal, meetings with students, meetings with educators, meetings with parents who have no relationship to parents' councils.

I would like to direct the members' attention to the gallery, to some members from Cameron Heights Collegiate who came here today: Mr Harry Vanderzand, the chairman of the parents' council of Cameron Heights Collegiate; Mr Doug Simpson of the Cameron Heights special education department. I have three students: Aaron Wudrick, Thomas Campbell and Stephanie Schott. I want to express my thanks to these individuals and to the principal of Cameron Heights Collegiate, Dick Beresford, for their contributions made.

The amendment is simple but it's effective. The government has taken the position that students should be spending more time in the classroom with their teachers, and this amendment provides one method of accomplishing this.

What is appealing about the amendment — again, as I have read in the research I did pertaining to other states and provinces — is that this is not a penalty. This is a motivational tool, the carrot before the stick; the stick if necessary but not necessarily the stick.

Members of this House can reflect back on the days when they were in school and looked forward with eager anticipation to the time when they would qualify to get their driver's licences, particularly the men because as boys we considered that obtaining a driver's licence was one of the methods of passage into manhood.

Members can remember the tremendous sense of pride we experienced when we passed our drivers' tests and when we were able to drive a car for the first time. It is with this same sense of anticipation that today's student looks forward to obtaining a driver's licence. It is with this same sense of pride of accomplishment that today's student passes his or her driver's test and obtains the licence to drive.

To many students, obtaining a driver's licence is at least as important as actually graduating. Surprise, right?

It is because of the high value young people place on obtaining a driver's licence that this amendment has the potential to become a very valuable tool in rewarding positive behaviour. Few students will want to jeopardize their opportunity to obtain or maintain their licence. The amendment, in its simplicity, provides every parent in the province with a valuable tool, a tool the parents can use to encourage their young teenagers to go to school and attend classes.

Imagine a young man showing up at the door for a date. I, as the father, notice that the young man shows up without wheels. I want to know why he has shown up without wheels. Is he going to walk downtown with my daughter? Is he a bad student? Has he been involved in drugs or some other crime? Why does he not have wheels?

The amendment provides a valuable tool for educators. It is easy to visualize a teacher asking a student if the student really wants to lose the privilege of driving a car just to skip class. Perhaps even more important, this amendment provides a valuable tool for many students who face negative peer pressure to skip classes.

It is easy to visualize a dialogue between two students, with one urging the other to skip classes to go downtown for a smoke. This amendment provides an effective tool which the more responsible student can use to counteract this form of negative peer pressure. If giving in to negative peer pressure to skip class has the potential to cause the student to lose the opportunity to qualify for his or her driver's licence, or worse still, lose his or her driver's licence, the chances are the student will refuse to follow the negative influence and will stay in class.

Fifteen states in the United States have enacted legislation, with different variables, similar to this legislation, states such as California, Idaho, Illinois, Kentucky, Indiana. They have all experienced success. In the case of West Virginia, which enacted the legislation in 1988, in 1989 they experienced an immediate increase in attendance at class in school. It went up from 80-odd per cent to 95%, and in cases to as high as 98%. It had an immediate impact.

I ask the members here today to please support this bill.
1010

Mr David Caplan (Oriole): I'm really pleased to have the opportunity to join the debate. I'd just like to point out, at the outset, that I am not supportive of this bill, and I'm going to outline my reasons why. This bill has a particularly close parallel to one introduced in the previous session, Bill 134, by the member for Halton Centre, Mr Young. I must tell you I was happy to see that bill die on the order paper and I hope the members do not have the poor sense to give this bill any life either.

I would like to talk about two aspects: the intent of this bill and the methods for punishment this bill is suggesting. This bill in meant, in the words of the member for Kitchener, to "reduce crime in and around schools and to increase attendance and therefore the learning ability of students." I must be very frank with the members that I don't see the intent of this bill in exactly the same light. To me, this bill is an extreme and an inefficient and inef-

fective way to address the problems of youth crime and truancy. I don't think the punitive and short-term measures that the member is suggesting, and that seem to be the member's intent, are the way to go.

The purpose of this bill seems to be to enforce a system of discrimination against youth. In fact, it does quite a bit more than that. It sets up a whole additional level of bureaucracy that would be needed to enforce it. I will come to a bit about that later, but I am curious whether or not the member has run this by the member for Lincoln, the head of the government's vaunted Red Tape Commission, for what the practical effect would be should this bill become law.

Creating another level of bureaucracy for punishing young people will be more expensive for all the jurisdictions concerned: the criminal justice system, the education system, the incarceration system, and the federal government because this covers wide-ranging levels of government.

I want to talk a little bit about the methodology of this bill. The first question I would pose is: Is this legislation really necessary? The stated purpose is to prevent those young people who are enrolled in school and have been found guilty of an offence involving drugs, violence or the use of alcohol — is it not true that young persons and the laws governing them are adequately served by legislation and policy directives that are already in place?

I will cite a few examples. Smoking by young people and smoking on school property is covered by local by-laws, by board of education policies and covered by the Tobacco Products Control Act. The use of alcohol by people under the age of 19 is controlled by provincial offences as well as the Criminal Code. Possession, sale and ingestion of intoxicating drugs is governed by the Food and Drugs Act and the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act; in fact it's incorrectly identified as the former Narcotic Control Act in this bill.

Is it really necessary to introduce further legislation when these acts, and indeed the scope of punishment, is already covered under these acts I've mentioned? If that's the case, that already existing legislation covers the penalties the member seeks — as an example, a judge could impose a sanction similar to what the member is seeking here — then does this bill not fail the test that the government has stated, that they want to create less paper and more jobs? What this bill will do is exactly the opposite. It will create more paper and fewer jobs. Why a member of the Progressive Conservative government with that avowed goal would want to create another level of administration and bureaucracy to achieve the same penalties that already exist in law is beyond me. So it's an unnecessary overlap and increased paperwork from competing legislation.

The implementation and enforcement would no doubt be inefficient and costly. I would quote to you an article from the Kitchener-Waterloo Record where Principal Beresford says that he is uncertain how well such a bill could be enforced, so there are concerns there.

The member indicated in his comments that this is working well in all the jurisdictions that have tried this type of legislation. That's not exactly correct. There is at least one jurisdiction — I am not certain where — but Principal Beresford goes on to say there was one area that has dropped this practice because of concerns that it wasn't being enforced uniformly, so certainly questions of how it is going to be enforced are very timely and very topical.

The part of this about discouraging truancy is particularly concerning to me. That is one of the major objectives of this bill, to promote kids going to school. There are already tools within the school system and disciplines that can be imposed that can address this problem. Young people don't really need a coercive tool like this to get them to go to school. Actions should be to keep them in class and not affect their right to drive, in my opinion.

I'd like to be very clear with the members what this means, because the way the Education Act reads right now you can check yourself out of school when you turn 16. If your right to drive is affected by this piece of legislation because you do not meet the test of attendance in school, all you have to do is drop out. You can get your licence. Is that what we want to encourage?

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): No, we want to change that too.

Mr Caplan: The member says they'd like to change that. There were over 1,000 changes to the Education Act and I don't remember the member or the government proposing that particular change. If it does happen, that would certainly be a very progressive move, but it has not happened and this will potentially encourage young people to drop out of school. I don't think that any member in this House would want to encourage such an activity. This really amounts to an illegitimate use of power by adults against kids.

There was one other area I wanted to address and that was whether or not a young person who has been convicted of an offence under the Young Offenders Act, whether that information — and government members will be aware and all members of this House will be aware of the problems of communicating the names of offenders to other agencies. We have seen how individuals can run afoul of that portion of the law and some of the very serious consequences that it has.

Would it be possible under the law for that information to be transmitted to a school possibly, but to the Ministry of Transportation? I have been in touch with a legal clinic which specializes in laws pertaining to children and youth and it would seem that this would be quite problematic and in fact would offend part of the Criminal Code of Canada.

I would again suggest to members that you not move really all that swiftly on something which is going to have serious repercussions as far as contravening sections of the Criminal Code. We have seen what the results can be with the unfortunate circumstances surrounding the government's failed throne speech.

As I was saying earlier, this amounts to an illegitimate use of power by adults against kids. The approach of this bill is strictly punitive in nature. It does nothing to promote why kids should stay in school, it does nothing to prevent some of the offences. With all of the lists and all of the remedies available to the courts, to schools and to local jurisdictions, this is a back door way of finding another penalty and another punitive approach. In fact, I can see no rational connection between this legislation and the ability to drive and controlling the behaviour of young people. Study after study after study has demonstrated that, and I think members would certainly want to do some investigation and familiarize themselves with facts.

1020

This piece of legislation, this suggestion, amounts in my opinion to an unfair attack on our young people. I don't see adults being penalized in the same kinds of ways that this bill does. If the member for Kitchener argues that they are covered in existing legislation, then that legislation applies to everyone, so why would this bill be even necessary? The answer is simple. It's not. A discriminatory piece of legislation which targets young people is unfair. The law should apply to everyone, and if the intention of the member or of any member of this House is to have discriminatory laws, I wish that they would stand up and say that very clearly. As I said, this bill amounts to an illegitimate use of power by adults against young people.

I have been travelling the province for the past several months talking to young people. They tell me that they don't have a lot of trust for adults, because they see how they're treated differently. They feel they have been discriminated against by adults, by members of government. They would like equal treatment and equal standing within the confines of the law and in the way they are treated by the institutions that we uphold. This reinforces that perception that young people have, that there is going to be one law for adults and one law for young people, that we are going to have changes to the laws that we have in more punitive ways that are going to come through the back door. I don't think that's the kind of message we want to send to our young people.

I really do think that this bill will continue the feeling of alienation that our young people are feeling. It will continue the sense that no one is listening to them, no one is listening to their concerns, no one is prepared to stand up and say: "We're going to treat you fairly. We're going to listen to you."

The government has a track record of not listening to the people of Ontario, and I think that's specifically true in the case of our young people. You saw the case where students literally took to the streets of Ontario. They occupied office buildings to highlight the problem of high tuition and of student debt. What was the response of the government? Was it to extend a hand and say, "We're listening to you, we want to work with you, we want to help you"? No.

In the economic statement of December 15 by the Minister of Finance, you said, "We're going to increase your tuition 10% next year, 10% the year after. Not only

that, but we're going to deregulate tuitions in graduate and professional programs," ultimately increasing the cost to students and their families, also increasing the debt burden that our young people are facing, so very much a difference between what young people are saying and what the government does in response. This bill is very similar along those lines.

I point out to members that maybe they should listen to their own experts. They have the rural youth strategy group, which was highlighted in the throne speech, which said that access to transportation and to drivers' licences ought to be relaxed for kids in rural areas. Very, very interesting. This piece of legislation contravenes that particular notion. The government in the throne speech said, "We will act on the recommendations of that group."

You have this very interesting dichotomy, very interesting approach to "young criminals," to young offenders, "We're going to punish them," but government experts are telling them something quite different, so I'm having some difficulty understanding why the member is bringing forward this type of legislation in light of the fact that their own experts, and they have promised to act on those recommendations, tell them to do something opposite.

I think you can see from my comments that this type of legislation is not only ridiculous, not only unnecessary, but will reinforce and will cause young people to lose even what small confidence they have that this government is at all caring about their interests and is at all listening to the messages they have. I encourage all members of this assembly to reject this piece of legislation.

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): I want to start out by talking about some of the principles that I agree with, and those include governments taking initiatives that attempt to prevent young people from being involved in drugs, being involved in alcohol before they are of legal drinking age, and trying to prevent them from being involved in criminal activities. I also agree with the principle that we should try and encourage students to remain in school for as long as possible and that we need to instil in young people that being able to operate a motor vehicle in Ontario is a privilege and that it's not a right that comes without responsibilities.

Having said that, however, I just want to express my reservations about this legislation and its attempts to try and address those principles with which I indicate I agree. The member, in his opening remarks, said that this is an amendment that is simple. It certainly is, and we have seen from previous experience here that many times simple amendments don't accomplish what they set out to achieve.

One of the things that concerns me about this legislation is that it imposes additional sanctions flowing from convictions for criminal offences, and there are other examples where that takes place. I can think of convictions for impaired driving under the Criminal Code, for example, where there is an automatic suspension of a person's driving licence for a minimum of one year and increasing depending on the number of previous convictions that a driver may have.

That's something that is acceptable, because it refers specifically to driving restrictions and deals with an offence where a person was involved in criminal activity while they were driving their car, so it makes sense in that case. As well, it is a restriction that has universal application, and as the member for Oriole pointed out, the laws in Canada do have universal application, so that if you are convicted of an offence under the Criminal Code, the penalty should be the same no matter what your age. There are exceptions with respect to that as well, and we see those in the Young Offenders Act.

However, in this case I would like the member to address the reason why he would think there should be additional sanctions if you are convicted of some types of offences depending on your age. In order to do that, he needs to address the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which says there shall not be any discrimination in the application of laws in this country. That's a very important factor to take into account. I would be interested in knowing how he addresses that issue, because I'm not sure that's the message we want to present to young people, that it's okay to have discrimination in some of our laws that increase penalties towards young people.

I am also concerned about the information about the conviction of persons, which in many cases, for this law to be effective, is going to apply to persons who are young offenders. How is the Ministry of Transportation going to obtain the names of young offenders? That's something that I hope the member addresses in his remarks as well. We have seen an example of the release of information that would tend to identify a young offender in the throne speech last week. It led to the resignation of the Solicitor General, and as far as I know, it's still the law that information that leads to the identification of a young offender can't be released without the young offender's consent. I don't know how that is going to be addressed either.

1030

In the events that followed the throne speech, the former Solicitor General tended to indicate that the ends justify the means and that there are certain occasions where it's reasonable, if it's effective, to release information that would tend to identify young offenders. I disagree with that. I think that's another message we can't be presenting to young people: that the end justifies the means even if that may be contrary to the law.

Something we really need to focus on is the reason that young people become involved in criminal activity and why they may not be attending school. That's something this government needs to pay serious attention to. Although sanctioning young people with the suspension of their driver's licence may encourage them to stay in school longer, who knows whether that's the case or not? I think that there may be other examples, many good examples, of why young people become involved in criminal activity and why they're not attending school.

Study after study shows that if there is not a sufficient investment in people when they are young, even before they're going to school, even before they're born — we're going to be debating a resolution later on that talks about

how important it is to invest in babies. It's also important to invest in young mothers before they have children so that those children grow up to be healthy. We know that if children get a good start in life, they tend not to become involved in criminal activities. We know that if you invest \$1 in young persons before they even start attending school, the return on that investment is at \$7 later on. The return on that investment comes from reduced costs towards involvement in criminal activity, court costs, custody costs, the costs of drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs, costs in the health care system as well, because we know that children who are well taken care of when they're young don't tend to get sick as often. I think that's where we need to be focusing our attention, because by the time a person is old enough to drive, sanctions such as this are punitive and are not going to have, in all cases, the anticipated results that we're trying to achieve.

Those are just some of the concerns I have with respect to this bill. I also share the concern about young people who may be encouraged just to drop out of school when they're 16. I'd like to know how the member intends to deal with that issue as well, because that may be encouraging our students to drop out of school and not to stay in school. That's certainly not a principle I agree with, as I indicated when I first began my remarks. Those are the concerns I have with respect to this bill.

My friend from Welland-Thorold has a few remarks to make. I'll give him an opportunity to make those.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): I'm particularly delighted to join in this deliberation regarding the member for Kitchener's bill linking attendance at school with driving privileges on Ontario's road system. I'd like to commend the member for presenting the idea and trying to achieve what I think he has in the bill, the objective of safer roads, because all of us share a fundamental concern about the high incidence of tragedies and fatalities on our highways, not only in Ontario but across Canada, particularly with our younger people. He has listened to the folks of Cameron Heights secondary school. He has tried to fashion a bill which meets the concerns and express wishes of these young people. I believe there are probably other young people around the province who have looked at this bill on its Internet site and sent in some messages that favour it.

However, the Ministry of Transportation does have some specific concerns regarding the implementation of the bill, should it ever become law.

The first fundamental concern, which is the foundation of the bill, is the strategic linkage between attendance at school, presumably a secondary school — it could be a college, I guess — and driving on the roadways in Ontario. The problem with the attendance concept, as I understand attendance today in many schools and in many school boards across Ontario, is that when you get to grade 12, certainly when you get to your OACs, there is a voluntary sign-in system. That particular concern would have to be examined, should the member decide to have this bill go to a committee. That's one of the key policy areas one would have to look at, particularly with how it

applied to the states where he has cited that the linkage of the idea has provided success and greater safety for young people using our road system.

The second concern for the Ministry of Transportation relates to the administrative dimensions of this particular concept, because the ministry is concerned to a great degree about linking a non-driving activity, in this case attendance at a secondary school, with driving a vehicle, which many people still consider a privilege in Ontario. How do you create a strategic linkage and yet at the same time preserve the integrity of the driver registration system throughout this province?

The third concern the ministry has is the potential for creating a questionable precedent, because that is based on the tenuous relationship at this point, as set out in the bill, linking attendance to driving performance on our highways. There is some concern from the ministry as to what could occur should this bill ever become law structured the way it is.

Those three particular items are the principal concerns of the ministry. I think within that context, there has to be considerable detail and great scrutiny of this bill from those three perspectives.

Let me just conclude by stating, however, that I listened to the member of Oriole, as I always do, with some delight to see whether he had any alternative in terms of trying to create a linkage. As per usual, I find his new-found interest in red tape bills absolutely bizarre. It was the member's relationship with the previous occupant of the riding of Oriole, if you go back and look at the long lengths and strands of red tape we're facing at the Red Tape Commission, that is directly linked to what occurred in many, many areas of public policy through the Peterson administration. It's great to hear that the member has suddenly discovered an interest in red tape.

To conclude, related to the bill for the member for Kitchener, it is a concept or a principle that needs to be worked on with great vigour should it go to committee, otherwise the Ministry of Transportation still would have its principal concerns related to the computer application of the bill, how this particular idea could impact the integrity of the driver registration system throughout the province and the strategic linkage of attendance to driving.

1040

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I looked with great interest at this bill from Mr Wettlaufer. Having heard the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation, I find myself reviewing my position on the bill. I at first found some merit to this, and I know that the motives of the member are sound, and I am not by any stretch of the imagination about to criticize them.

But listening to the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation, as everyone has done — and I appreciate Mr Hastings's contribution to this debate — it appears that Mr Wettlaufer's own colleague from the Ministry of Transportation has been effective at scuttling support for Mr Wettlaufer's bill.

I told Mr Wettlaufer that had the bill been left with just the first half dealing with the matter of convictions under

drug offences or liquor offences, the Criminal Code, it may well have been a valuable bill to send to committee for refinement and for discussion and debate. I, along with Mr Hastings, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation — and you know, it's not often that I agree with Mr Hastings. As a matter of fact, this is the first time I've found myself in agreement with Mr Hastings. It's the first time Mr Hastings has been right. I am pleased to be able to acknowledge that and announce that here in the House, that Mr Hastings today was correct in his analysis. It's two and a half years down the road, but Mr Hastings has finally got it right. As I say, I've been persuaded, and I trust other members have as well.

Mr Lessard from our caucus, from Windsor-Riverside, has spoken to the rather wacky component of the bill and that's the business of school attendance. I suppose some would accuse me of having some self-interest, because if this bill had been in effect, requiring school attendance before one was eligible for a driver's licence, I wouldn't have received my licence till I was around 35 years old and it would have interfered with a whole lot of opportunities that a driver's licence gives to young people.

Maybe, rather than these purported solutions — I don't think this is a solution to the problem Mr Wettlaufer identifies — maybe the solutions, rather than coming from middle-aged members of the Legislative Assembly, should be coming from young people themselves. I would look forward quite frankly — and again I respect the fact that Mr Wettlaufer received guidance from educators, the principal, the guidance counsellor and the parent council of this school. I understand this is modelled on what may well be successful experiences in other jurisdictions — American ones again. The obsession this government has with the American right wing is no longer remarkable because it's become the norm rather than the exception.

It would be so nice to have a chat with young people. I've got to tell you, I suspect the real problems young people identify that they themselves are facing go well beyond the intent of Mr Wettlaufer's bill. The real issues are things like jobs and work. The reality down in Niagara region — I suspect it's not dissimilar from any other part of the province — is that the jobs young people used to do as students, that I did and Mr Lessard did and Ms Lankin did when we were students, the part-time, minimum-wage jobs, are no longer available to students because their parents are working at those jobs. So young people are finding it increasingly difficult, and we know that the rate of unemployment among young people is double that of their parents. The despair that creates surely is profound.

There is the fear young people have, never mind of finishing high school, of being able to pursue post-secondary education, be it at the college level or the university level, because of the massive increases in tuition costs, and every indication that they're going to increase even further. That seems to me to be a far more profound problem — not to diminish the intent of Mr Wettlaufer — that I would have hoped Mr Wettlaufer would have wanted to address.

I have great fears for the future of young people in this province. I know that the children of the very wealthy will manage to do just fine, thank you kindly, but I fear that the children of the rest of Ontario, those who don't share in the wealth, that the number, the size of that group of people is becoming larger and larger every day with this government's policy, aided and abetted by Jean Chrétien in Ottawa, no two ways about it. Mike Harris and Jean Chrétien have far more in common than they do separate in terms of their fiscal policies, in terms of incorporating Americana and American fiscal policies — dead American fiscal policies, those that date back to Ronald Reagan — into Canadian and Ontario life.

Unfortunately, I find myself in a position where I'm not going to be able to support this bill either. I want to thank Mr Hastings for his guidance in this matter. I appreciate that and I want to acknowledge that clearly.

Mr Klees: I am pleased to rise to speak in support of this bill, brought forward by my colleague from Kitchener, primarily because I agree with the principle that I believe the honourable member is addressing. I find it difficult that any member of this House would have difficulty with that principle, namely, that there should be consequences for offences that relate to a conviction resulting from the use of drugs or violence or alcohol.

I think specifically there has been so much discussion about the fact that in this province and in this country, while there may be penalties prescribed, all too often those penalties are never carried out, that when there are convictions, when incarceration is prescribed, a very small part of that sentence is ever really carried out.

It would be very valuable for members of this Legislature to pay a visit to institutions that are housing young offenders, that are housing individuals in the province who have been convicted, and see what the very uncomfortable circumstances are, the sadness of the state of affairs that people are dealing with who have lost their freedom as a result of breaking the law. Rightfully so that they be there, but let me suggest that what the member is trying to address in this proposal is that we build into our law some prevention so that young people have an opportunity to assess their choices before they make them — some matters of consequence their very lifestyle, something they consider important.

I agree with the member that for a young person to get his or her driver's licence is a very important passage in their lifetime. To have the sense that perhaps by making the wrong choice, to engage either in the use of drugs or alcohol, or to participate in a violent act, that may have the consequence not just simply of being designated a young offender — because unfortunately that today doesn't bear with it the appropriate consequences that are necessary to dissuade that kind of behaviour. I believe that the member with this particular recommendation is getting to the heart, as he put it, of motivation in the lives of young people. Let's build in some consequences.

Someone has said that as we consider legislation or the drafting of laws, we should be considering three aspects. First, is it morally right? Second, is it legally defensible?

Third, is it practical and reasonable for implementation at this time?

On the question of whether it is morally right, members opposite obviously feel it's not. I can tell you I feel that it's also not morally right that in this province and in this country we have come to the point where the laws of our land actually undermine the authority of parents, the authority of teachers and the authority of institutions to the point where there is, in many cases, very little respect left for authority. I suggest to you that it rests with members of this House to restore that kind of respect and authority, that respect for the laws of our land, and that we build in consequences.

1050

I ask the members opposite, is it morally right to build in significant consequences to wrong choices in people's lives, particularly at an early age? I believe that it is not only morally right, I believe it is our moral obligation as legislators to ensure that incorporated into the laws of this province there are the necessary consequences that cause young people particularly to pause before they make the choices that are before them. I think we have an opportunity here to do exactly that.

Is it legally defensible? Members argue Charter of Rights, members argue discrimination. I can say to you that I believe that has become, unfortunately, a very convenient argument in legislatures across our country when someone perhaps doesn't have the courage to take a stand on something that, yes, will have some opposition. It probably will not be popular. It may not be popular with those young people with whom you've had a lot of dialogue, I say to the member for Oriole. Any time that we build consequences into people's lives it's uncomfortable and we would rather not have them be there. But I can tell you from young people I've spoken to — and this is the vast majority of young people in our province, who are law-abiding, who do not want to have the kinds of activities around their schools like violence, drug use and alcohol abuse — they do not want that kind of activity interfering with their activities in and near their schools. The majority of the young people in our province, I believe, would in principle as well support this.

Is this being done anywhere? The member from Windsor suggested that this has serious legal implications. It is being done. It's being done in our country right now. It's being done in the province of Manitoba. Manitoba for a number of years has been using drivers' licences to control the behaviour of young people in that province. I suggest to you that we would do well to follow a solid example. There has been no challenge against that activity in Manitoba. Perhaps over the years they have had legislators who have had much more courage than legislators in this House. I think this is our opportunity to step up to the plate, take on the challenge and work with this.

Is it legally defensible? Is it practical? My recommendation would be that we refer this bill to the standing committee on administration of justice, because clearly there are some aspects of this that need to be reassessed,

that perhaps need some refinement, and to ensure that it fits into the overall framework. I would support that.

I commend the honourable member for bringing this forward. I thank the young people with whom he has been working, with their creativity and their support for it, and I believe it's the right thing for Ontario.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): It's a pleasure to rise today. As all members do, I've done research on this bill and talked with constituents, but in a meeting I had with students from three schools this morning we briefly discussed the issue and I asked for their input. They were from my riding. The schools were Eastdale, Central, and my old school, McLaughlin, as well as a group of exchange students from France. I must add that it was a pleasure to see a teacher of mine when I was schooled at McLaughlin — Ms Grabowski at that time, now Ms Gadd — was there.

What surprised me was that there was concern about the issue of the impact it would have on individuals of that age and trying to get jobs. The overwhelming position of the students at that time supported the piece of legislation that's before the House at this time. It was that position that swayed me now. I will be supporting that and recommending it go to committee to finalize all the details at that time.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Kitchener, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr Wettlaufer: I appreciate the members for Oriole, Windsor-Riverside, Etobicoke-Rexdale, Welland-Thorold, York-Mackenzie and Oshawa taking part.

There is concern about enforcement implementation and would there be uniformity in enforcement. I submit to the members here that this is why we have committees, to do studies on how an act would be implemented, to ensure there would be uniformity.

There is concern about the voluntary sign-in re absenteeism. That should also be addressed by committee. That's why we have committees. There is concern about the Young Offenders Act. There is concern about the Young Offenders Act all through this country, so much concern that the federal justice minister, Anne McLellan, has suggested that it will be amended and that the young offenders will be named.

There is concern about dropouts, that this might actually increase the rate of dropout. The experience in the United States, in those states which implemented this legislation, proves the exact opposite; it actually increased the number of students staying in school.

The member for Welland-Thorold raised the concern of young people and he said their concern was jobs. I find it rather ironic that this member, who was a cabinet minister in a former government, would raise the concern of young people's jobs when it was during that government that the rate of unemployment, particularly among young people, increased. I was an operator of a small business during the term of that government, and you know, how to operate a successful business is to start with a big one and elect an NDP government.

The Acting Speaker: The first ballot item has expired.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): I move that in the opinion of this House the provincial government should expand the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program, so that children identified through the program who are at risk of social, emotional, physical or learning challenges, receive the necessary services to support their healthy growth and development.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Pursuant to standing order 95(c)(i), the member has 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Arnott: I'm very pleased to bring forward this resolution this morning, intended to draw attention to this excellent program, and to speak in support of its expansion.

When we think of society's most vulnerable members, babies and children are certainly at the top of our list. They are completely dependent on adults for their care, for their nourishment, for their start in life. The care they receive at this critical stage determines to a great degree their future prospects in life.

As a government, I believe that vulnerable children at risk of poor development have to be among our highest priorities. We need to ensure that parents receive the support and advice they may need to adequately meet the needs of their children. That's why I'm so pleased that the Minister of Health has recognized this area as a priority, with the establishment of the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program. Recently I was very pleased to join her at the announcement of funding in the amount of over \$130,000 for the Healthy Babies program serving Wellington county.

I would also like to thank the Minister of Community and Social Services and the minister responsible for children's issues and recognize their important work in the development of this program. We also owe a great debt of gratitude to our public health nurses, whose expertise in identifying and supporting families with babies and young children at risk forms the basis for the development of this crucial early intervention program.

The old saying that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure is certainly applicable in the Healthy Babies program. The Healthy Babies program identifies families who have the potential to be at risk, linking them with existing social, health and educational programs in their communities. All children in Ontario will be screened at the hospital or prenatally by physicians, midwives or nurses. Assessment of all at-risk families is conducted by these professionals, and an in-depth home assessment is undertaken by visiting public health nurses, intending to help the families who may be at high risk.

Parents of children who are deemed to be potentially at high risk may be offered home visits by nurses or home support visitors specially trained and supported by public health nurses. Home visitors are parents from the community who are trained in child development and are knowledgeable about services in the community that would be of benefit to parents and their babies.

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Through education, advice and support, parents who would otherwise feel isolated and apprehensive about child-rearing are given a helping hand to alleviate the pressures of parenting, meet the needs of their children and create an environment where obstacles to a child's development and abuse and neglect are less likely to occur. The services are as broad as the problems the families may be encountering, from mother-and-infant programs to literacy, employment services and family counselling.

Research on early intervention programs seems to demonstrate that the most important feature is the home visiting component. The Healthy Babies program provides provincial funding for some high-risk families to receive an average of 13 visits over a two-year period. That amounts to about one visit every two months until the child is two. My resolution this morning speaks to the need to expand healthy babies so that all children at risk receive sufficient home visits, with the number of visits tailored to the needs of the family.

I firmly believe that if we want the healthy babies program to reach its full potential in helping vulnerable children, the government must devote more financial resources to the program so that at-risk children and their families receive continuous, frequent and prolonged support through home visiting. Research has told us that home visiting in early intervention programs is the single most important factor in promoting healthy mental, emotional and physical development of children, while reducing the incidence of abuse and neglect.

Success of early intervention programs in other jurisdictions, most notably the Healthy Start program in Hawaii, has hinged on the frequency and duration of home visits to all families at risk. Healthy Start boasts an incredible 99% success rate in preventing abuse and neglect for families enrolled in their program, which is tremendous success. All families participating in the Healthy Start program start with weekly visits by a support worker. These visits can continue until the child is five years old. As families become more stable and secure, the frequency of visits declines substantially, for the need is diminished.

Key elements of the Healthy Start model are being replicated in many jurisdictions in the United States and are supported by the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse through the Healthy Families initiative.

Successful intervention programs show us that when families receive visits on a regular and frequent basis over a long period, a rapport develops between the family and the home visitor or nurse. This special and trusted person is viewed as a helpful friend, rather than a stranger, and the family becomes more comfortable in identifying problems that the nurse or home visitor can attempt to help them resolve. The nurses and home visitors are the links, the lifelines for some families, to advice and services that help them to properly care for their child.

The government should also support and encourage municipalities that may wish to devote their own resources to supplement this program. I recognize that with the

realignment of services, municipalities have many new challenges and are attempting to make the most efficient use of their resources. Municipal governments have a record of responding to the needs of their communities by delivering necessary services efficiently and at a reasonable cost. Local governments in Wellington have demonstrated this fiscal prudence over the years while delivering the services that people need efficiently and effectively. If municipal governments feel that the healthy babies program is worthwhile — I believe they will — I hope they would give consideration to devoting more resources to the program, to supplement the government's support.

I believe that volunteers could also make a valuable contribution to the Healthy Babies program. For three years, before I was elected in 1990, I volunteered as a Big Brother in my home town of Arthur. Big Brothers attempts to team boys without fathers with a positive male role model. This program is very successful in providing boys with a male presence in their lives. Its success, I believe, is due to the one-on-one personal attention that children receive and the friendship that inevitably follows.

The same concept could be employed to supplement home visits in the Healthy Babies program. In Wellington county there are many parents who have a great deal of child-rearing experience and who I know would be prepared to contribute to their communities in this positive way. Many parents would derive great satisfaction by helping families with their time, knowledge, advice and support. I urge the government to examine closely how we can make better use of volunteers in the Healthy Babies program to stretch our resources and help more families.

I would like to now read excerpts from letters and submissions I've received in support of expanding the Healthy Babies program from organizations and people devoted to protecting and promoting the health of children.

Dr Douglas Kittle, who is in the Legislature today, of the Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Health Unit, has written, "I strongly support your efforts to ensure that funding be made available to allow this important program to be successful in its support of families."

Moe Brubacher, who is the executive director of Family and Children's Services of Guelph and Wellington County, has written: "We are convinced that prevention programs can be an effective and cost-effective way to alleviate problems arising from child maltreatment. Thus we strongly support your resolution."

Dr Paul Steinhauer, who is one of Canada's foremost children's psychiatrists, and who works at the Hospital for Sick Children, writes, "I look forward to being able to help you in any way I can with your private member's bill in support of greater funding for Healthy Babies, Healthy Children."

Peter Ringrose, executive director of Family and Children's Services of Waterloo Region, writes, "Expand the Healthy babies program to include pre-birth visiting where needed, and longer periods of post-birth visiting and support through the use of well-trained volunteers."

Gordon White, who is the executive director of the Association of Local Official Health Agencies, has written,

"Your government has shown leadership and vision by implementing this program and can now go farther by ensuring it is adequately funded to really achieve the goal of healthier babies and children."

Mary McConville, executive director of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, has written: "Experience has taught us that home visiting, where needed, should be extended at least until a young child reaches the school age or is enrolled in a preschool child care program. Continuing to invest in prevention will reap long-term rewards for our children and for the province of Ontario."

Sandra Randell, who is president of the Association of Nursing Directors of Official Health Agencies, a group that represents public health nursing management in Ontario, writes, "Using a prevention/early intervention approach, Healthy Babies, Healthy Children has the potential to create a lasting impact on the shape of Ontario in the future by promoting the optimal growth and development of all children in Ontario — our future citizens and our leaders."

By bringing together all of our resources as a society, we can ensure that the needs of all children are met, that they grow up in a safe and nurturing environment. If the provincial government can provide parents with the skills and coping tools they need to catch potential problems from the beginning, before they develop, children will be the big winners.

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I look forward to the debate this morning.

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I'm very pleased to say that the Ontario Liberal Party will wholeheartedly endorse the private member's bill being brought forward today by the member for Wellington.

I must say to the member that I enjoyed my visit on Tuesday, when I spent the day in his region, and in fact encouraged the member to go further in forwarding the cause that the Ontario Liberal Party has been forwarding for some time. We know that the page today has been taken directly from our report, from the McGuinty Task Force on Children, called First Steps and we're very pleased to see that he is endorsing our proposal, that in fact his private member's bill relates directly to what we are proposing in First Steps.

We welcome the people who are here in the gallery today from that region. I very much enjoyed speaking specifically about First Steps in the Waterloo-Wellington region just this week. I had the opportunity to speak with students at the Waterloo-Oxford District Secondary School, who gave various concerns about the provincial government, and in the afternoon spent a good deal of time at a round table with educators who came to listen and discuss various aspects of the First Steps program that the Ontario Liberal Party is putting forward. So I applaud the member from Waterloo region who is coming forward to say First Steps is exactly where the government must be in making children a priority.

We certainly have had concerns over the last several years that the focus of government has not been on chil-

dren. This morning we talked with listeners of CHIN radio, much of the Italian community. We talked to the Italian community this morning about First Steps. We had callers from the Toronto area, from the Italian community, calling in to give us commentary on our discussion of the First Steps program. They were asking us questions about day care, asking us questions about what we intend to do.

1110

Many of the comments from the Italian listeners were about their experiences when they're having babies in hospitals. One of the key planks of the First Steps program discusses the first 48 hours of a child's life. We know those are very crucial days and certainly a crucial part of those first zero-to-three years. We propose that we introduce a minimum stay of 48 hours for all moms when they're having babies — they can certainly choose to leave earlier if it's not a new experience — but in particular for new moms, who have to use those first few hours to rest, to be educated about some very basic things like bathing new babies, to discuss issues like breast feeding with professionals at the hospital.

I have to raise a concern. While we laud the introduction of this kind of private member's bill and certainly will support it, at the same time this very same government, through various ministries, actually is moving in the reverse direction where it affects children. For example, this member today should be speaking about what home visits will find in the homes of children who actually have that intervention.

Mr John L. Parker (York East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mrs Papatello: Mr Speaker, if he's going to interrupt, you should stop the clock.

The Acting Speaker: It's a point of order. It's unfortunate, but that's the way it works.

Mr Parker: Mr Speaker, it's one thing to lift a document to make a demonstration; it's another thing to keep the prop on display throughout one's remarks. I think it's time to put the —

The Acting Speaker: I think that's a bit farfetched, because I've seen quite often documents by this government being used as a referral text. I don't call this, in my opinion, a prop. If you don't agree with my decision, you can always challenge me.

Mrs Papatello: We have little enough time in this House to discuss children, so I don't enjoy the fact that I'd be interrupted on this most important issue.

For those people who choose to call us to get a copy of the First Steps program, the back of it — which is what I'm referring to — will show the building blocks that are a significant foundation of the First Steps program. Right on that, you will see it says, "Forty-eight-hour hospital care for new mothers."

It's a very important step and new moms should know about what it is we are advancing. The point is that when we introduce more home visits, which is what this member is choosing to do today — he's actually saying that if we discover that there are issues that families need to contend with once they've had a home visit, we have to have the

opportunity in our communities to address issues with these families. That means services available in the community to address need, whether that be through children's mental health agencies, which this government has cut, or whether that means programs through children's aid societies, which this government has cut. We have a great deal of difficulty that while the member comes forward to try to push the government forward in the direction the Ontario Liberal Party would like to see us go, his government is moving in the reverse direction on a number of fronts that affect children.

We heard the member today talk about the importance of local public health. This is the same government that downloaded the cost of the public health units on cities and towns right across Ontario. We can only hope that there will be the opportunity for those local city councillors and town councillors to have the finances to continue to provide necessary programs like nurses. Public health units have been cut back year after year after year, and when we went around Ontario and talked about children we met with public health units, public health nurses, who had significant concerns about what they weren't able to do because they simply didn't have the finances.

I would encourage this same member from the Waterloo region to go to his own caucus and his own cabinet to say, "What this government needs is a children-first policy directive," so that when every single ministry of the Ontario government chooses to bring a new policy or a new initiative, the first filter they use is, what effect will that change have on children in Ontario? If the government had used that in its last three years, my view is that many children would not have had negative effects from this very same government.

Just a couple of weeks ago we heard the Premier himself talk about why he felt it was necessary to take nutrition moneys from pregnant mothers. I find it very hard to parallel those remarks by the Premier with the member who brings forward a private member's bill today. They're completely opposed. We know that nutrition is most important for pregnant moms whether they're on assistance or not. The last thing the government should be doing through regulation or through bills in this House is making it more difficult for mothers to be good moms. We all know that it's a parent's responsibility to take care of their children, and the role of the Ontario government should be to provide the kind of policies and direction and leadership to allow parents to do their job well and to give support when sometimes that kind of support is necessary.

Let me conclude by saying that we will be supporting the private member's bill today. I'm happy to share my time with other members of the Liberal caucus who also will be supporting the initiative. We can only hope this member will go further than that, will go further in speaking to his colleagues, his colleagues in the cabinet of the Conservative Party, who are moving in the reverse direction. I hope this member will be capable of putting the brakes on that direction.

The Acting Speaker: I'd like to make a brief comment. If you have a document in front of you and you refer

to it, that is acceptable. But if you do it in such a way as to taunt the opposition, it becomes iffy, it becomes nearly a prop. I think you have to trust your own judgement on that. The Speaker was quite adamant, quite clear, on props. If you have a document in your hand and you refer to it, occasionally you show it, but if you do it purposely, if you hold it in front of you to arouse the ire, if I can put it this way, of the government or the opposition, it's not acceptable. I think it's a question of judgement.

Let's proceed with the debate.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I feel somewhat hard done by in that you've made your ruling just before I hold up and taunt the government with my document, but I'm actually going to refer to it and not just hold it.

I want to begin by saying that I certainly, on behalf of my caucus, indicate that we will be supporting the resolution of the member for Wellington. The member for Wellington knows that I have a great deal of respect for him personally and I know his commitment in this area and believe that his resolution comes very genuinely from the heart and is something he cares about.

I have to say to him that I wish the same were true of his government. In part my remarks today will be in support of his resolution, but I must point out some of the contradictions in terms of what's happening in the province today.

Let me begin by talking about the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program. In the limited start we have with it, it is a program this government has initiated which I am very supportive of. You referred to what I think is considered worldwide the successful pilot project, in a sense, in Hawaii; we have had longitudinal studies from that to show us the success that program has had and the difference it has made in people's lives. Surely, that's what being government is about and surely that's what these programs are about, to make a difference in people's lives.

We have seen from all kinds of research around the world, whether it be the United States, the UK, western Europe, that these kinds of programs of early intervention and support mean so much. The years zero to three — zero to six, but primarily zero to three — are the critical formation years for children, and anything we can do to support kids in their healthy development during that period of time is of such importance in terms of their future success.

I had an opportunity during my period as Minister of Health in this province to work on building and expanding the Better Beginnings, Better Futures program, again designed to provide supports to families in the early days. This is an area that the member for Wellington referred to as the ounce of prevention, and I fully support governments using resources in a wise way, using resources in the front end to prevent problems, to support wellness, to support healthy development when it comes to children.

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I've had the extreme pleasure and honour over the years to meet with, speak with, and work with, in some

circumstances, some of the people the member for Wellington referred to in the testimonial letters he read out, people like Paul Steinhauer. You didn't mention Fraser Mustard, but I know Fraser would be completely supportive of this initiative as well, and Dan Offer, people like that, who have spent years doing the research and trying to convince governments of all stripes of the importance of moving forward in very comprehensive way in dealing with children.

The problem I have is that while I support what the member wants to do in expansion of this program and think that could make a big difference, we have to take a look at this program not in isolation but in the context within which it fits in the province of Ontario right now. The member referred to the fact that one of the things the program does and can do is to help make links for children and families at risk to other services out there, to social services and health services and family services.

I'm about to recite a litany of cuts from this Harris government to those very services. The very services needed to support families in our communities are being stripped back. We may be able to get the early identification, which is very important — please don't get me wrong; I support that completely — but where people go from there and where they get the supports, the other umbrella of support, the safety net in our community, there are holes in that. It is fraying right now. We must look to rebuilding that safety net, that support for families in our neighbourhoods and in our communities.

When I think of some of the specifics — I had a meeting recently with an official from the Toronto District School Board. This is just one school board, but these stories are being replicated around the province. As they're dealing with the cuts in education funding, the new funding formula and how it's structured, they're telling me what the results of some of that would mean in terms of programs that are going to be lost to the board.

The parenting support program for teen moms who are in school, the very families who will be at risk, who will be visited occasionally by public health nurses, which will be very important, but who are getting daily support in the school for those who are attending school — that program is going. That is a crime. It's going because of this government's cuts.

The breakfast program: The government made a great ballyhoo a year ago or so about putting some money for a period of time into the breakfast programs. The breakfast nutrition programs in the Toronto District School Board are likely going to be cut, again as the result of the changes in funding.

I refer just briefly to one of a number of documents from Putting Children First, a report that our leader, Howard Hampton, and I, as children's critic, were involved in producing and distributing about a year or a year and a half ago, a major report on responding to the government's proposed child care reforms and a number of other areas dealing with children's services. This particular folder is called A Litany of Cuts to Children. It's four pages, but I'm just going to highlight some of them. I think you'll

see, I say to the member for Wellington, the importance of also pushing the government to restore supports and services in some of these other areas.

First of all, half a million Ontario children were affected by this first extreme action of the Harris government, which was the social assistance rate cut of 21.6%. Half of the people in Ontario on social assistance were children. Those children are worse off today, children who are more at risk, more in need of the program that you want to expand. There have been cuts to child care subsidies, forcing many municipalities to abandon those spaces. If you look at reports like the Perry report out of the States which looked at children at risk, early childhood education and supports, that's where the figure that the investment of \$1 gets you \$7 down the road came from. That's dealing particularly with families at risk. The loss of support services in our communities comes at a critical time, when families are poor and facing many more difficulties.

Recreational programs are cut, like Little Beavers for native children. They abolished the community support program that funded training and development programs for youth. It was specifically targeted at young single moms, people who need the supports to ensure that their kids aren't at risk. That has gone; that's been abolished. Those supports aren't there for them any more.

There are cuts to public funding for public libraries, one of the only places where her kids can get books. There were cuts to the children's aid society. We lost 450 front-line staff in the children's aid societies, people who were supposed to be part of early identification of kids at risk and child welfare and child protection. They eliminated the children's services coordinating advisory groups, which coordinated the patchwork of programs, tried to bring services together. They cut maternity homes, residential and non-residential programs for teen moms by 25%. If there is a group that is obviously more at risk than others, it is young single moms who need these kinds of supports, yet the government has cut those supports.

They have cut programs aimed at tackling family violence through early intervention or prevention. They cut, and in some cases eliminated, family counselling programs. In your remarks, you referred to one of the things that early intervention and supports can do: provide supports for the mom, like literacy. Those pro-literacy programs have been cut. The training programs have been cut. You mentioned family counselling. In some cases, they've been cut. In some cases, they've been totally eliminated as a result of the cuts of the Harris government.

This report goes on and talks about the proposed changes in child care. It talks about cuts to violence-against-women programs, which puts children in danger, and the fiasco at the family support plan. If you want to talk about supports to families, the family support plan, the economic support, what happened when your government laid off 290 experienced and trained staff and closed nine regional offices and centralized everything? They were all in boxes and there were computers all over the place, and families were not getting their cheques. How many kids did you put at risk during that period of time?

I have referred to some of the cuts in education, the loss of junior kindergarten. The new funding formula that has come out is a recipe for fewer services for early childhood education rather than more. The rhetoric sounds great, but when you look at how it is implemented and you look at the choices school boards are going to have to make with respect to enhancements in grades 1 to 3, when supports to the classroom have been cut, teaching assistants and other sorts of things, you'll see that the money will go there. That's the option that has been given, as opposed to putting it into JK and SK. It's going to mean less early childhood education.

Of course, we know that the fastest growing group of individuals using shelters in Metro Toronto, for example, is children. Affordable housing is an issue for kids.

There are many others I could refer to, I say to the member for Wellington, but I want to share my time with other members of my caucus. I believe your sincerity in your desire to have your government expand this program. I join with you in that request to the Harris government to expand this program. It is important. It would be worthwhile to expand this program.

But I have to say that doing that in isolation, without looking at all of the other areas in which the government's actions have made kids' lives worse — just read some of the reports that have come out: the McConville report two days ago, the Finlay, the child advocate report, yesterday, and we're waiting for the three reports the minister won't release. We know there are huge gaps in the system between child welfare, children's mental health, the young offender system and family supports. All of these areas, along with the litany of cuts I read off, are areas the government must also pay attention to.

We will be voting in favour of your resolution, but it is with the strongest advice that you work equally hard to ensure your government restores funding to these other critical areas for families and children.

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): I stand today to support my colleague the member for Wellington in this important bill. What I am going to be talking about today is what's actually happening with this program in my area of Huron county. I have talked to some people who are involved with children in my area, and I think it's important for people to understand exactly what the funds for Healthy Babies, Healthy Children are being used for. So far, \$10 million has been put into this program. My riding, which is very rural, got very little of the money. I want to talk about how they've stretched those dollars and what we would do if we had more funds, if we had more support for Healthy Babies, Healthy Children.

I would first like to say that I have two very active boys. I can only imagine what it must be like when things are different in your family and you might be a family that is classified as at risk or as needing help from the community.

When the Ministry of Health, and in my case the Huron county public health board, talks about a family at risk, what they're really talking about is a family that lacks supports, for example, not having family to fall back on,

not having a mother who comes for two weeks when your baby is born, or when you're sick, someone who comes in and says, "I'll give you a hand." They lack family supports in some cases.

They have, in other cases, very poor parental role models. They might have had a disturbing life as a child themselves or they grew up in an abusive situation. We want to make sure that those people get all the benefits that a community has to give these people a hand up.

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In my riding, because we don't have a public transportation system, we also deal with the isolation issue. We have people in our community who have a baby, they're home with the baby for the four months' maternity leave or for a longer period of time, and they can't get out of the house. We have to be concerned about them and how they are coping with little baby and Mom at home alone and nobody else for most of the day. That's a tough issue too.

In our area there are some services, and people don't know what those services are. That's another issue where we think a family might be at risk. They might, in that particular case, just need knowledge.

The last case, which I think we all deal with at some time in our lives, is family stress. That can be as a result of a baby that has health problems when they're born, or just financial matters, or any of those things that are day-to-day matters that we deal with. That puts a family at risk.

We're saying, when the mother is at the hospital and any of those situations exist, we as a community need to look at that family grouping and ask, "Is there anything we can do to help these people?" Nurses come into the hospital — in my case, the county of Huron public health offices — and they say: "We think we have a family that's at risk here. We would like you to look at this family and to decide what should be done."

This program is run, as you heard earlier, by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Community and Social Services, but there are many people in the community who make this system work. Our advisory board that makes this work includes children's aid, day care, public health. It includes a great program we have in our community called rural response for healthy children. There are a great number of people who work to make sure that this program works for the people of Ontario.

When you talk about who might be at risk, if you don't know your community or you're in a specific segment of your community, you might not recognize that the numbers are just as high as they are. The Ministry of Health has given statistics, which are basically being confirmed by my community, that say for every 100 children born, 25 of those children have some factors that might put them at risk. Of those 25, 12 are at high risk. I think those are the people we're trying to focus on. We're trying to ask, "What can we do to make sure that those children have an existence we're all happy with and that they are safe and healthy in the future?" because we know that's a very important part.

In Huron county, a case worker comes into the family, and they first of all ask if they want help. Hopefully they do in those 12 cases out of 100, because there is a real opportunity to make the lives of those children better. We try to find people they consider to be people who can help them. We don't say: "You will have a person from the public health office. You will have X, Y and Z." We say, "Who do you think in the community can help you to go through this process?" We put people together. In our community, we have two lay resource visitors who will come into the community and help the family to deal with all these difficult issues. We've got those lay resource people coming in, and as the member for Wellington said earlier, they try to build a rapport to help the family grow, to nurture the children, to move a healthy family along.

What we see is a problem with where we are right now and what we would do if we had more resources available to us in Huron county is that we would look at providing more services for the children between zero and two years old. Right now, the public health office takes money from their budget and makes sure that they come into that house once a month, every month, as opposed to 13 times over two years, because too many things can happen when a child is at risk.

The second thing we'd like to do is to expand the program to age five. Those kids are at home with Mom or with their parents, and what happens is that no one could see that child from two until five. We need to make sure the community is involved in that child's daily life.

The third thing is that we would like to see more public health nurses involved, dieticians, so the betterment of health is being worked with.

Also, if we ever had the opportunity, we'd like to be able to help people when they're pregnant, to work on that prenatal stage, which really sets a child on a very good course.

I think our program is working. We have a number of consultants we can pull into the family to help them. Children's aid, public health, CPRI, hospitals, consumers, lactation consultants, people from Rural Response for Healthy Children, day cares — all of these people are working to ensure that our kids are safe and healthy in the community, and that's a very important aspect.

I'd like to thank two people in my community who I believe are doing a terrific job to set this program up with limited resources, and that's Marlene Price, from the public health office, and Jane Hoy, from Rural Response for Healthy Children. They've done a terrific job, and I know our program is going to be very good.

Thank you to the member for Wellington for such a fine proposal.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I'm very pleased this morning to stand in support of the resolution by Mr Arnott. I believe it's sound. The member for Huron likewise was supportive and gave some examples of some of the things that should be expanded, should be increased. But it seems to be quite obvious that some of the resources at the moment are not there, and I would assume that one

of the motivations for Mr Arnott's resolution is that we are not doing enough at this stage.

That was clear. My colleague the member for Windsor-Sandwich identified a task force that went around the province, in fact spoke to 70 different groups and individuals in places like Belleville, Barrie, Windsor, Fort Frances, Toronto, Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Ottawa, plus e-mails and faxes and letters and phone calls that were received when our party was looking at the whole issue of children. And what were some of the things we heard? We heard people from these groups say that children are not a priority for this government at this time.

Therefore, the resolution is in keeping with what we're picking up from parents and from those who spoke to us, that parents are having difficulty balancing their responsibilities at home and at work and, as a result, families are under tremendous stress. We heard that we're not doing enough to ensure the healthy development of children and their learning capacity. Finally, we heard about the unprecedented number of children suffering the effects of poverty, hunger, neglect and abuse. We've heard this being raised many times in question period, asking the government. We're well aware that the government has a minister without portfolio for children. I gather she's busy this morning; otherwise I'm sure she'd be with us, because I'm sure she'd want to hear the particular debate.

It seems to me, as my colleague from Windsor-Sandwich has suggested, that by placing children first you have a criterion by which you make decisions. You say, "What's the impact on children and how is this going to affect the support of children, the rearing of children, the protection of children?" As we know, that's got to be a primary investment, and heretofore that investment and that concern and priority, it seems to us, have not been the government's primary concern. It has been the economic bottom line.

I think more and more members now, though, as illustrated this morning in this House, have seen that if you focus only on economics, then the human dimension and those who are most vulnerable — and of course children don't vote and they don't have the same kind of capacity to debate, to raise their voices. All they can do is cry out. Do we hear them when they cry out? I think there's a growing groundswell throughout the province in all quarters that indeed we're not doing enough, that in fact we've damaged some of the systems we've had.

I would like to quote a few people who in the task force we had and First Steps said: "Children first as a primary principle is needed: What is important is that at each turn of the way, at each point of decision, we put the wellbeing and the emotional health of children at the central point of our concerns and endeavour."

This was Dr Brenda Wattie, the director of the Canadian Mental Health Association.

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The Canadian Mental Health Association of course is an organization with tremendous expertise and a knowledge of what is needed to provide a healthy environment for children, the supports for children and the impact on

mental health. We're not only talking about the mental health of children here, of course; we're talking about the mental, physical and spiritual health and growth of children. We know that if we don't provide the nourishment, if we don't make the investment in the early years — the government has engaged Fraser Mustard as a world-renowned expert on child development. Fraser Mustard will tell you that we will cause unseen damage to children if we don't provide the nourishment, that the growth and development of children in their early years is extremely important. That's why junior kindergarten is extremely important. It's extremely important for those families who are squeezed and under pressure and are finding it difficult to spend the kind of time they would like to with their children and provide the resources available to help nurture children in the early years. That is another one.

Time is running out. I just want to say to Mr Arnott that I support the resolution, as our party does. We believe it's extremely important. We hope that following the passage of this today, there indeed there will be some lobbying internally to really impress upon the government that all members feel it's important to support children in their development.

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): I want to indicate my unqualified support for the member for Wellington's resolution calling for the expansion of the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program in Ontario. It's a welcome resolution and it's one that's refreshing coming from a member of a government that really isn't seen as having children as one of its main priorities.

We saw that exhibited in the speech from the throne last week. There was a lot of emphasis placed on how this government measures success. They talk about retail sales, consumer and business confidence, housing starts, shrinking welfare rolls, agricultural production, things like that. I think what we need to be focusing on more is that we measure prosperity in our economy by the impact it has on people, especially on children. I'd like to see measurements of success by seeing a decrease in the number of children living in poverty, for example, a decrease in the number of children who require the services of children's aid societies and of the courts. I believe that's how we should be measuring success in this province as well.

There was scant mention of what this government was going to do with respect to helping vulnerable children in the throne speech. There was mention of a Learning, Earning and Parenting initiative to encourage young, single parents to stay in school and complete their education. That was about the only mention of how this government plans to help children. I hope the member for Wellington's resolution is going to have an impact on the government's commitment to children and will increase and expand the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program.

A couple of weeks ago in Windsor we had a forum on child care, put on by the Canadian Union of Public Employees. We heard speaker after speaker — people from children's aid societies, child care workers, parents of autistic children — indicating the problems they were

experiencing as a result of this government's cuts to children's programs. They mentioned specifically the impact that the reduction of social assistance benefits of 21.6% back in October 1995 had on them, and we see the impact of that in our own community.

The Canadian Union of Public Employees forums are going to be visiting other cities throughout Ontario, and I encourage people to attend those hearings and express their concerns about this government's initiatives as they relate to children.

We live in a very prosperous economy, and Windsor is one of those places that is doing very well. But at the same time we're seeing an increase in the use of food banks, especially by children. Why is that? That indicates to me there are some people who are benefiting by the improvements in this economy, and in increasing numbers there are people who aren't benefiting from that improved economy. Many times we see that it's children who are suffering the most from this government's initiatives.

I support the member's motion. I wish him luck in his efforts to get this government to expand the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program.

Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West): I too am pleased to rise in support of Mr Arnott's private member's resolution. I am a firm believer in looking at programs that work and in building on programs that work, so I want to highlight some of the programs that work around these types of initiatives.

Mr Arnott referred to Hawaii's early intervention program. It's called the healthy start program. It's a voluntary program in Hawaii, which is surprising in that less than 1% of people actually take part in that program, even though it is voluntary. It has a success rate of 99% in preventing child abuse and neglect, which is pretty phenomenal. A three-year study of this program confirmed a great improvement in child development and parent-child relationships, as well as a reduction in the use of punitive discipline while virtually eliminating abuse, yet ensuring quick identification and early intervention in the few cases of abuse that do occur.

When parents learn effective parenting skills, it helps them to feel much more comfortable and at ease with their children; it takes away a lot of the stress they worry about and allows them to not only care for their children but enjoy caring for their children. For the babies, early intervention programs are of course invaluable, because the most critical brain development occurs in these early years.

In New Brunswick, they have an intervention program which helps expectant mothers who are at risk for health problems that could affect their own health and the health of their child. The intervention program got into full swing in 1994, so it's too early yet to evaluate the outcomes of that program. However, judging by statistics in the 1996-97 year, 97.7% of eligible expectant women voluntarily took part in the program. So, it would appear that it is serving a need in the community.

In New York state, in Elmira they have an early infancy project, which is considered one of the most thor-

ough controlled studies of the home visitor model. The study reported a reduction in child abuse rates from 19% in the control group to 4% in the nurse-visited mothers. The report concluded that the program would pay for itself before the child even began school, because of reduced hospital costs from abuse, better nutrition in the family, less subsequent pregnancies and greater employability for the parent.

Closer to home, there's another example of an innovative prevention program. It's at the Helen Tufts Nursery School in Kingston. This school is a real example of being ahead of its time. It has had a program there since 1966 that looks at providing services to three- and four-year-olds from economically disadvantaged homes. One of the unique features of that particular nursery school is that it provides a bus which picks up the children to take them to the school and delivers them back home.

I want to draw your attention to an article that was in the Toronto Star earlier this week. I always like to bring forward anything that's happening in Hamilton. This particular article was written about the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program that's working in Hamilton. I want to quote Bonnie Bridle, who is the program manager with the Hamilton-Wentworth regional public health department, who states:

"We know that providing families with adequate support and access to resources very early in the game can have tremendous impacts on the health and wellbeing of children...."

"Trudy Cooper, clinical manager of obstetrics for Hamilton Health Sciences Corp, says, 'Healthy Babies, Healthy Children is about preventing problems, rather than intervening after there has already been a crisis.'"

I think we in this government agree that we need to look at programs that work. We need to develop those programs, because a child's early years lay the foundation for all that follows in their lives. Instead of spending money treating the consequences of child abuse or poor childhood outcomes, we can now tackle the problem where we should be tackling the problem, at its root, through early intervention, and help improve the lives of defenceless children.

I am very proud to support this resolution and I'm pretty confident and hopeful that everyone else in this House will.

1150

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): I am very pleased to rise and lend my support as well to the resolution. It has been put forward by the member for Wellington, who is known for his compassion, particularly for those most vulnerable. I'm not surprised he would bring forward a recommendation that would call upon the Minister of Finance to give serious consideration to the extension of a program that is proving itself across this province.

The Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program is working well, but clearly what the member is identifying is the need to expand that program. It's a need now to

recognize the importance of adding another building block, and I applaud his resolution.

The fact is that the current program is a sound investment in our children and in our province's future and I think we ought not to forget that. The program is part of the government's long-term commitment in developing an integrated system of effective services for vulnerable children which will increase and strengthen existing services for families and children. Therein lies the issue that has been addressed by the member for Huron and by my colleague from Hamilton West: the concern of extending this program within the fiscal capabilities of this province; beginning to recognize the importance of adding services that go beyond the age of two, that go perhaps to the age of five, that certainly begin to take advantage of some of the government's policies.

Let me remind us of nurse practitioners, beginning to take advantage of their great skills across this province in assessment and in interdiction, to in fact begin to bring together the agencies, to coordinate the services, so that those both in the prenatal condition and in the postnatal condition are in fact receiving the kind of care and attention they rightfully should expect.

I am very pleased to lend my full support and endorsement to this resolution. I am pleased to hear what seems to be unanimous support of that and I hope that will be the case.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): I would just like to congratulate the member for Wellington for pressing for this idea. Also, concomitant with and parallel to is the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council's \$3.1-million investment in preschool children's language programming.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The member for Wellington, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr Arnott: I really sincerely appreciate the comments I've heard from my colleagues in the House. I want to thank the member for Windsor-Sandwich, the member for Beaches-Woodbine, the member for Huron, the member for Ottawa Centre, the member for Windsor-Riverside, the member for Hamilton West, the member for High Park-Swansea, and the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale for his brief contribution. I really appreciate the support and want to thank you sincerely for that.

I want to respond to a couple of points in the brief time that I have. Responding to the member for Beaches-Woodbine, she listed a litany of what she perceives to be spending cuts that the government has had to undertake. Certainly we have had to reduce expenditures in quite a number of key areas. But we know and we are encouraged by the fact that our funding partners have done a terrific job of trying to do better for less. We've challenged them to do that and they've been up to the challenge to a large degree. Also, we are motivated by a desire to save those important programs, and certainly that's our primary objective with reducing them.

I want to respond also to the comments of the member for Windsor-Sandwich. I appreciated the report that came out by the Liberal caucus. I don't want to taunt you with it

but it's here, the Report of the McGuinty Task Force on Children, which I researched. I want you to know, and perhaps remind you, that I brought forward this resolution on Healthy Babies, Healthy Children last December. It was scheduled for debate the last day that the House sat, but of course we were pre-empted for government business. I spoke to your leader to wish him a merry Christmas outside the chamber afterwards and he said, "This is the kind of thing that we support." Then I was pleased to see two months later it was included in your report, so I want to thank you very much for that. I can't say it was my idea, but certainly I appreciate the support that you have shown.

I want to thank also Dr Doug Kittle for being here this morning from our Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Health Unit and to thank him for his advice and his support. I also acknowledge Diane Bewick from the Public Health Nursing Management of Ontario for her presence and her support, and also acknowledge the great help that I received from my executive assistant, Joanna Willis. Thank you, Joanna, for your help.

Thank you all members of the House for being here today. I appreciate your support.

The Acting Speaker: The time for private members' business has expired.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (DRIVERS' LICENCES OF CERTAIN SCHOOL PUPILS), 1998

LOI DE 1998 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (PERMIS DE CONDUIRE DE CERTAINS ÉLÈVES)

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): We will now deal with the first ballot item in the name of Mr Wettlaufer, ballot item number 5.

Mr Wettlaufer has moved second reading of Bill 4. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to standing order 95(j), the bill is referred to the committee of the whole House.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): I'd like to submit that the bill get submitted to the justice committee.

The Acting Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): We will now deal with ballot item number 6, standing in the name of Mr Arnott.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, I do now leave the chair and the House will resume at 1:30 of the clock this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1159 to 1328.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): It is now time for oral questions.

Interjection.

The Speaker: We made an agreement yesterday.

Interjection: Is there agreement on unanimous consent?

The Speaker: I thought we had it yesterday.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): Mr Speaker, I believe there is an all-party agreement for one speaker from each party to make a brief statement on Sexual Assault Prevention Month.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): I understood there was consent to begin with the unanimous consent. Is it also my understanding that would be followed by statements and then by questions?

The Speaker: I never know of these unanimous consents. What we agreed to yesterday was that question period would begin the routine proceedings and then we'd go through them as normal but question period would be the first order of business.

This request for unanimous consent: Agreed? Agreed. The unanimous consent will take place for the three speakers, and then we'll go directly into question period.

Apparently we have another one after that.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): There are two.

The Speaker: Right. So never mind.

SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION MONTH

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): May is Sexual Assault Prevention Month in Ontario. This government, like every government since Sexual Assault Prevention Month was first recognized in 1988, is committed to stopping the violence and to creating an environment where women are free of sexual assault.

As my colleagues across Canada know, it is a difficult but necessary struggle. It is a struggle that our government, like others across the country, continues, community by community, to work to stop the violence.

The costs for victims of sexual assault and their families are impossible to comprehend. Sexual assault has an enormous impact on society as a whole. For women who have suffered the pain, whose potential has been restricted, whose independence has been diminished, we must commit ourselves to stopping the violence. For crisis intervention workers, the front-line workers in shelters, police, counsellors, nurses, physicians, for neighbours and indeed for whole communities, the effects of this violence are both long-term and far-reaching.

The statistics speak for themselves. According to Statistics Canada, only six of every 100 sexual assaults are reported to police. Some 60% of Canadian women are

afraid to walk alone in their communities. One in five teenaged girls has experienced abuse in a dating relationship. Between March 1996 and April 1997 the Ontario Human Rights Commission received 225 sexual harassment complaints. These statistics are appalling. They represent conditions in Ontario which are simply not acceptable.

Whether we are political leaders, professionals, business people, neighbours or friends, each one of us, individually and together, must take responsibility for the prevention of violence. We must continue to work towards safe homes, safe communities and safe workplaces. We must overcome violence aimed at women and their children.

To succeed, we must educate our young people. Just as each new generation must be educated on the dangers of drinking and driving, each new generation of children must be made aware of violence issues in terms they can appreciate and understand.

To reach out to our young people, we have achieved a number of successes with our private community and public sector partners. Last November we launched two anti-violence television productions for young Ontarians. With our Partners for Change network we produced Peace Breaks on TVO and You Oughta Know: Teens Talk About Teen Dating and Abuse on YTV. Just this morning I was informed that You Oughta Know has been nominated for a Golden Sheaf Award at the Yorkton International Film and Video Festival in the education category.

We also have implemented and expanded The Joke's Over, an educational tool to teach kids that sexual harassment is not okay and that it can escalate into sexual assault. These projects will ensure that awareness and prevention activities touch and educate every age group, every part of our population, and we must work hard together to make certain that the resources we have developed together are used appropriately and in a timely manner in our schools.

My colleague the member for London South, as minister with responsibility for women's issues, stated in May 1993: "It may take time before we see the results for which we are hoping because it takes time to dispel the myths; but dispel these myths we must, and to ensure the safety of women and children and to take us one step closer to equality in this society we must continue to dedicate ourselves to education around sexual assault."

I want to pay tribute to past work done to create a foundation in this province for violence prevention initiatives and also to pay tribute to the work that we have done, including:

A series of public education campaigns including brochures on date rape and sexual assault in 20 languages; training manuals and workshops; award-winning television, radio and print public service campaigns to educate the public on this issue; passing the Victims' Bill of Rights in 1995, identifying and protecting specific rights for victims of violent crime, more than half of whom are women; developing a Partners Against Crime strategy to develop an infrastructure of partnerships of all key stake-

holders to target serious crime and crime prevention — I might add, with the assistance of our former Solicitor General — and the strategy includes grants to communities and front-line policing, partnership with the private sector and community, establishment of the Ontario Partners Against Crime Council and the use of technology for information sharing problem-solving; establishing a victim support line to provide around-the-clock, person-to-person referral to local victim services and updates on an offender's status; expanding the victim-witness assistance program and the victim crisis assistance and referral service through the victims' justice fund which was established to support victims of crime, along with the support of my friend the Attorney General.

In addition to approximately \$100 million annually our government invests in programs to address and prevent violence against women and their children, in 1997 we announced \$27 million over four years in new funding for programs and services to break the cycle of violence against women and children.

In addition, our Agenda for Action strategic framework includes a number of innovative initiatives. We've implemented services at six sexual assault treatment centres to ensure victims of domestic violence have access to emergency hospital-based medical care and counselling. We continue to work on a training package for children's aid society workers to help them deal more effectively with children who have witnessed domestic violence. We've delivered French-language assault prevention training for teachers and parents in five communities across this province.

We've implemented eight new domestic violence courts. Police, crown attorneys and victim-witness assistance staff are trained on the issues of domestic violence, and a mandatory male batterer program is a component of each court. We've supported 19 male batterer programs and eliminated the backlog. We've increased availability of emergency legal aid services for abused women. This year we supported 36 new community-based violence prevention projects through the Ontario women's directorate priority project funding program, and we represented approximately, in this instance, 136 innovative partnerships to educate on the issue of violence against women and their children.

There are many initiatives within our Agenda for Action for education and prevention, including establishing 47 new school-based service projects in school boards to ensure children who witness domestic violence receive appropriate care through the schools, and we have much more to do; developing and delivering a series of teaching tools to assist ESL teachers in integrating violence prevention education activities in our ESL classrooms; developing public education campaigns with private sector partners to promote violence prevention.

In closing, I would like to share with you the comments of Dianne Poole, the Liberal MPP for Eglinton, who said in May 1994: "One of the very encouraging factors in combating the myths surrounding sexual assault is that the members of this House treat it as a serious problem and in

a non-partisan way. I think this is vitally important, that we in this House set the standard and work together to make a difference."

1340

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): I willingly join with my colleagues on behalf of my caucus in the recognition of Sexual Assault Prevention Month. I believe this recognition is important because it focuses our attention on the need to make every effort to raise the awareness of the continuance of sexual assault, sexual assault which, taken to the extreme, too often means violent rape and even death but which is intolerable in any way, in any form, in any place.

I hope we are making some gains in our awareness of the realities of sexual assault. I'm not sure that we are making any real progress in its prevention.

Rape crisis centres report that their statistics are going up. This is hopefully because more women are seeking help and not because there are more incidents. The problem is that we just don't know, because for too long women have been afraid to come forward, afraid the support will not be there for them if they do.

Although there has been an increase in women coming into rape crisis centres, there are fewer women reporting their attacks to the police. They are increasingly concerned about how they will be dealt with in the justice system. Challenges to the rape shield law and to the law that protects the confidentiality of sexual counselling records have heightened those concerns.

Let us hope that the Supreme Court clarifies the constitutionality of these laws quickly and positively in the support of justice for victims. We cannot hope to prevent violent sexual assault unless it is treated as a crime and is punished, but the crime cannot be punished unless there is a conviction, and there can't be convictions unless women are able to go to court with confidence that they won't be battered there too. Nor can we prevent sexual assault unless we understand the ways in which sexual assault in some forms and in some places is condoned.

The Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres has asked the provincial government to declare the first week in June as Sexual Harassment Awareness Week in order to focus attention on this very serious issue. This was asked for last year and didn't happen. I hope this year there will be a positive response, because here too we need to raise consciousness. We need to be able to identify sexual harassment, to define it, to recognize its causes as well as its manifestations. But to do this, if we're to be able to do this, women have got to be able to report their experiences of sexual harassment, and they won't do this unless they know they are going to be taken serious and unless they know they will not be punished for speaking out.

There was a study done for the federal government that was reported last November that states there are insufficient police resources to investigate criminal harassment cases and that this in turn leads to weak depositions in court, and as a result more than 60% of harassment cases are withdrawn by the crown and 75% of those convicted receive suspended sentences or probation.

Having raised that concern, let me recognize that I'm confident that all of us in this House do indeed take the issue of sexual assault seriously. I know that some of the small amount of money that has been given to the minister responsible for women's issues to address all of the issues of concern to women has been directed towards rape crisis centres. I am concerned, and I won't belabour it today, that those funds are not adequate and that they are not flowing to community-based rape crisis centres that are providing such important support to women in a non-institutional setting.

The bottom line — and I agree with the minister on this — is that we are not doing enough, either as a government or as a society. We're not doing enough when 39% of Canadian women experience at least one incident of sexual assault after the age of 16. We're not doing enough when 83% of women report that they're afraid to walk alone to their cars and 76% report that they are worried about using public transportation after dark. I wonder what has happened to our focused efforts to take back the night and to keep our streets safe for women. Surely we're not guilty of saying that we've done all that and we shouldn't have to keep working at it.

We're not doing enough when 80% of women with a disability will be victims of sexual abuse in their lifetime and when senior women are at higher risk of violence than men simply because they are women. We're not doing enough when women are prevented from accessing support services because of disability or language limitations. We're not doing enough when there is an increase in sexual assaults involving rape drugs, which make women even more vulnerable and more readily victimized. And we're not doing enough when women can't be tested for the presence of these drugs, which must be done within 12 hours, unless they are prepared first to lay charges.

We need to do more. We need to do more to encourage victims to break the silence, and we need to do more to provide support when they do. We need to do more to understand what is happening, and we need to do more to understand the dynamics that allow it to happen. We need to be open and honest about sexual assault in our communities, and we need to commit ourselves to policies and actions that confirm our willingness to deal with the reality of violence against women. We need to be clear not just in our words but in our actions that we will not tolerate abuse.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I am pleased to represent my caucus this afternoon on Sexual Assault Prevention Month. I attended a press conference this morning that was put on by the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres. The president, Barbara MacQuarrie, and the vice-president, Rhonda Roffey, held this press conference to declare the month of May as Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

They focused this morning on three areas that they talked about as new challenges facing them this year. One of them both of you, I believe, alluded to, and that is that the statistics at the rape crisis centres continue to go up

and the number of women who are choosing to report to the police has decreased.

"Women have clearly lost faith in the justice system. Not surprising in a year that saw challenges to both Bills C-46 and C-49, two bills created to protect victims of sexual assault from revictimization within the justice system."

That is a direct quote from the press release they put out this morning.

A second concern they raised was, and again I quote, "Centres report an increase in reports of sexual assaults involving 'rape drugs.' Rape crisis centres across the province have been educating women and service providers about support to victims and prevention."

Let me say that we have been hearing for some time now about these new kinds of drugs that are being used to sedate young women who are then raped. What we are hearing today from the women who gave the press conference is very serious. It's something that, although it may be more a federal responsibility and I'd like to see the federal government act on this, this government should look into. Women are saying that in some locations they are unable to get tested to see if this drug was used on them unless they're willing beforehand to say they'll press charges, before they know exactly what's going on. That is unacceptable.

The third issue raised this morning was sexual harassment in the workplace, which you didn't really go into very much today, Minister. I was hoping that you would take the recommendation, which I understand almost happened last year but didn't, and announce it today. What is being asked for here is that the first week of June be deemed Sexual Harassment Awareness Week.

You may know and the whole House may know where this came from. We have all heard in the media over the past while about Theresa Vince, who was murdered in 1996 by a harasser who, after he killed her, killed himself. This woman, Theresa Vince, worked at Sears and had complained and sought help and advice and didn't get it. Eventually, she was murdered. That is an extreme case of what can happen in the workplace to a woman when she is being harassed. It happened. There was an inquest and there were recommendations which came out of this inquest. One of the recommendations was that Chatham proclaim that week as Sexual Harassment Awareness Week. I would recommend, as the Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres and others are recommending, that the week be proclaimed as Sexual Harassment Awareness Week.

The problem of sexual harassment in the workplace is a very serious problem. It permeates a woman's life completely when this happens on a day-to-day basis in the workplace. If there are people here who don't quite understand or don't take it seriously, I would suggest that you always put your sister or your mother into the position of the person, not just a faceless woman but somebody you love and care about in that position. I would like to see all members of this House ask the Harris government to proclaim this week Sexual Harassment Awareness Week.

1350

One of the things I enjoyed this morning at the press conference was a letter read out, from Men Walking Against Male Violence. I'm going to read this letter to you. This is from a group in Dunnville, Ontario, and it reads:

"Men Walking Against Male Violence wish to add our voices with the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres in raising sexual assault awareness.

"We wish to stand in solidarity with the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres, the women who support and assist survivors of sexual assault, who courageously resist, and speak publicly of the casualties, the numbers and the dominant sexist culture that allow it.

"Men Walking Against Male Violence cannot be present at this press conference, because from April 29th to May 15th, we are maintaining a visible street presence in two dozen communities. Between Windsor and Ottawa, thousands of women and men are protesting together in these walks, challenging male violence and male opposition to women's equality.

"In solidarity for justice

"Dean McKay, for Men Walking Against Male Violence."

I think this is a good opportunity for the male members in the Legislature to find out if there are walks happening in their own ridings, to get involved with Men Walking Against Male Violence. There is the white ribbon campaign. There are more and more men walking together, working together to walk side by side with women in challenging the dominant culture, which I would say sometimes promotes violence against women. It is time that men started to stand up and walk side by side with women and fight together to stop this insidious kind of violence against women.

I would like to end by thanking the minister today for her words. I believe it is an issue we all need to work together on, and I am committed to work with her and with the government to do everything we can in this House as legislators to stop violence against women in Ontario.

ISRAELI INDEPENDENCE COMMEMORATION

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Mr Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent for one representative of each party to speak in recognition of the 50th anniversary of the State of Israel.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon Mr Harnick: We have recently observed in the Jewish community and around the world Yom Ha'Shoah, Holocaust Memorial Day, a day on which we remember the six million Jews murdered by the Nazis during the Second World War. The sufferings and the testimonies of Holocaust survivors are an affirmation of the eternity of the Jewish people and the greatness of their spirit. There is

no greater testimony than the birth of a nation. Israel is a nation born out of the shadow of the Holocaust.

In 1897, Theodor Herzl dreamed of a Jewish homeland, a country where Jews could live without fear and without the constant presence of anti-Semitism.

The fundamental mission of the original Zionists was to create a secular country where Jews could lead peaceful lives. Fifty years after the rebirth of the nation, that aspiration has not yet been fully realized. While the lives of Israelis are far from what we would consider normal, we all should pause and recognize the miraculous accomplishments of this tiny and fiercely democratic nation.

In a historical perspective, it has existed for merely a blink of an eye, yet Israel has blossomed. In 1947 the United Nations voted to partition Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states. On May 14, 1948, David Ben-Gurion officially proclaimed the new State of Israel and became its first Prime Minister. Despite five wars, enemies on its border, massive immigration, terrorist attacks and the scrutiny of the world, Israel continues to astound.

Palestine began with 650,000 Jews. Today it is a flourishing nation, a home to 4.5 million Jews and one million Israeli Arabs, with one of the highest standards of living in the world. In the past nine years alone, Israel has absorbed some 750,000 Russian immigrants.

It is the people of Israel who never cease to amaze. Swamps and deserts were turned into arable land, giant strides have been made in high technology, and Israeli culture is a mosaic, rich in the history of native Israelis and immigrants from all over the world.

The people of Ontario have long maintained strong ties to Israel, with thousands of Ontarians visiting Israel every year. Historically, individual Ontarians have been responsible for providing Israel with both economic and moral support when they have needed it. Now Israel is contributing to the world economy and to that of Ontario. Earlier this year, an Ontario company, Canadian Highways International, was awarded the contract to build a superhighway across Israel. Although the country itself is not much bigger than the greater Toronto area — in fact Israel can fit into Ontario 51 times — it is none the less a huge undertaking and demonstrates that Israel is rapidly maturing as a country and as an economic force.

In January of this year I had the great honour of being in Israel to attend the Fifth Annual Conference of Jewish Ministers and Members of Parliament. Along with over 70 representatives of 23 countries, I had the opportunity to learn more about current Israeli affairs from leading politicians, civil servants and Israelis. The experience, as always, for me was truly a memorable one.

In conclusion, to quote liberally from this week's editorial in the Canadian Jewish News, "After 2,000 years, the Jews have returned to Israel, to where they always were....

"Though it is halting and frustrating, the current process of reconciliation between Jews and Palestinians is irreversible, and we pray that it will ultimately evolve into an accommodation of mutual dignity and trust, and

security for the continuation of health and prosperity for the State of Israel."

Chag Sameach.

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): In the Jewish calendar, the fifth day of the month of Iyar 5708 coincided with Friday, May 14, 1948, in the western calendar and was a landmark moment that changed Jewish history forever. A dream that had passed from one generation to another for almost 2,000 years had become a reality. On that day David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister, announced the Declaration of Independence with the words "We hereby declare the establishment of a Jewish state in Eretz Yisrael, to be named the State of Israel."

Today we celebrate Israel's 50th birthday, and the official motto of the celebration, "Together in Pride — Together in Hope" are sentiments that we can all share, for Israel inspires both.

I can tell you from a personal point of view that those sentiments were really put to the test in my own personal life. In 1985 my daughter Kathy, my youngest, announced that she would be going to Israel to study at the Hebrew University for one year, and off she went. What was supposed to be a one-year sojourn turned into a six-year study program at Hebrew University where she graduated with a double degree in English literature and political science.

My wife and I shared in the pride that a daughter of ours had enough commitment to go to Israel and to really become part of what has become an amazing social experience. But included in that pride was the constant hope, as we got reports out of Israel of random terrorist attacks — one bomb explosion in a bus shelter right outside her university residence — that she would not become a victim. So this was something that I truly lived.

What is happening is that Israel, as a young country, has endured five wars, surrounded on all sides by sworn enemies, constantly living in fear of terrorist attacks and still managing to absorb massive immigration that has taken the population from an initial 600,000 to today's nearly six million citizens. They have absorbed 750,000 Jews from the former Soviet Union and another 80,000 from Ethiopia. Israel has not only survived but has performed what can only be described as a modern miracle.

Israel has developed a thriving economy, attained international recognition in science and the arts, in technology and agriculture, has made peace with two of its neighbours, Egypt and Jordan, and all the while remained the only fully functioning democracy in the Middle East.

1400

Israel stands not only as a bastion of democracy in the Middle East but as a vital bond between its citizens and the Diaspora, the Jews around the world. It is this bond that gives the Jewish people the world over strength in the present and confidence in the future. The historical union of a land without people and a people without land has provided a focus for one people to be united in their faith, proud of their history and mindful of their shared destiny.

In spite of all of these accomplishments, there are many challenges still facing the State of Israel. Tonight, as we join in Toronto's celebration of the Night of a Lifetime, a

celebration which will be the largest of its kind outside of Israel, it is well to remember that we must continue our vigilance. There are those who are still disseminating racist and anti-Semitic material, and we have just witnessed the vandalism of 43 headstones at the B'nai Israel cemetery in St Catharines.

Our wish is that, together in pride and together in hope, Israel will continue its progress into the next 50 years in peace and security. I am sure that all of us here assembled would wish to join in wishing those celebrating Israel's 50th anniversary a hearty mazel tov.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I am pleased to stand today on behalf of the Ontario New Democratic Party caucus to mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel. I would like to reflect on the achievement of one dream and the hope of realizing another.

Today we join in celebrating that in 1948 out of the horror of the holocaust there came into being a Jewish state, the State of Israel. This was indeed the fulfilment of a dream held by people who had been living homeless and scattered to the four corners of the earth for over two millennia, the dream of a place they could call their own, a haven and a point of reference for every Jew on earth.

Over the last 50 years Israel has become renowned for its scientific, cultural and social achievements, and we rejoice today in those achievements. But there is still another dream that has not been fulfilled, to create a place where people could live in peace and security without oppression and violence.

An essential ingredient has been missing, a just and lasting peace throughout the region and a peace that recognizes the legitimate concerns of the State of Israel for peace with security and a peace that also recognizes the legitimate claims of the Palestinian people.

Various UN resolutions have addressed this very important issue; the Oslo accord marked an historic leap forward and an opportunity for peace. Our wish today is that all leaders find the courage to make this work.

The history of the Jewish people over the centuries gives us hope that there will be a time when all people of the Middle East can live together in peace and security. On the 50th anniversary of the founding of Israel, we stand in solidarity with those people of good conscience and goodwill, Jews and Arabs, who see peace as the ultimate goal in securing the dream of the Jewish people. We extend wishes of peace and hope, Hatikva, to the people of Israel.

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I am seeking unanimous consent of this Legislature today that we conduct an emergency debate on how to extend compensation to all victims infected by hepatitis C and to reopen discussions with the federal government in that regard.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The leader of the official opposition is seeking unanimous consent for what you heard. Is it agreed? I heard a no.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We heard the Minister of Health today

indicate that the government is in favour of extending compensation —

The Speaker: You know something? With great respect, it's a point of order you're standing on and it doesn't sound like a point of order.

Mr Hampton: I'm asking unanimous consent.

The Speaker: The same, okay. The leader of the third party —

Mr Hampton: This is the unanimous consent I'm asking:

That the Ontario Legislature support the extension on compassionate grounds of the existing compensation program for all the victims of contaminated blood who are not covered by the said program;

That the Ontario Legislature support the initiative taken April 29, 1998, by the Quebec National Assembly, demand that the federal government follow up on this resolution and encourage the other provinces to approach the federal government in the same manner.

I'm asking unanimous consent today.

The Speaker: You're asking unanimous consent for that debate?

Mr Hampton: Yes.

The Speaker: Unanimous consent for the debate? Agreed? I heard a "no."

ORAL QUESTIONS

COMPENSATION FOR HEPATITIS C PATIENTS

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Deputy Premier. I want to raise with you this issue of compensation for hepatitis C victims in Ontario, and indeed the nation, in which your government is obviously a very important party.

I've had the opportunity to speak with many Ontarians and my sense from them is that there's an overwhelming desire to compensate all those who were poisoned by the official blood system with hepatitis C.

We should understand the record here. Your government originally had no intention of participating in this discussion. You were dragged to the table kicking and screaming. It's my submission that Ontario is not paying its fair share in the current deal.

Quite simply, Deputy Premier, will you agree to reopen the deal to include all victims and increase Ontario's compensation as required?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): Certainly not to belittle the seriousness of the problem with respect to hepatitis C victims, I beg to differ with the leader of the official opposition that the province of Ontario had to be dragged anywhere. My recollection is that the province of Ontario took the lead in including haemophiliacs in the whole discussion and negotiation with the federal government and the provinces. The prov-

ince of Ontario has certainly not dragged its feet on this issue.

I believe that the provinces are doing significant participation with respect to hepatitis C victims. Speaking for the province of Ontario alone — but I presume other provinces have similar numbers that they are spending helping victims of hepatitis C — it's in the neighbourhood of \$700 million, the ongoing care that Ontario —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: I beg to differ, of course, Deputy Premier. Our province has not distinguished itself in this matter. Originally, your minister, Jim Wilson, refused to sit down and talk about any kind of compensation, to even consider it.

Let's understand the nature of this current compensation arrangement for hep C. The federal government has led the effort and has contributed \$800 million, while the provinces are paying in total just \$300 million. When AIDS and HIV victims of the blood system were compensated, the federal and provincial shares were almost equal. This is a phoney economy for Ontario.

We can't, and should not, escape our responsibility. A huge number of those hepatitis C victims are living here in this province. We have a responsibility to assist, to sit down at the table with the feds to review this matter and to come up with a better package. Once again, Deputy Premier, will you do that?

Hon Mr Eves: First of all, there was an agreement, as the leader of the opposition knows, that the provinces made with respect to the federal government with respect to hepatitis C victims from 1986 to 1990. The provinces put in some money; the federal government put in some money. That dealt with that particular agreement and that aspect of the problem.

There are other people out there, I would quite readily recognize, prior to 1986, who need some help, and I understand the province of Ontario this morning has been in discussion with other provinces with respect to this. The provinces' — I'm using the term collectively — point is that they have ongoing costs with respect to hepatitis C victims which, over a space of time, for the province of Ontario are approaching three quarters of a billion dollars.

The leader of the official opposition might want to look at the Deputy Prime Minister's comments yesterday in Ottawa with respect to the fact that the federal government should indeed be looking at further assistance on behalf of the federal government.

1410

Mr McGuinty: I'm not sure if the Deputy Premier is aware, but today your Minister of Health on the radio was quoted as being open to reopening discussion regarding the compensation of hepatitis C victims. That means she believes that the matter ought to be revisited. She believes that the federal government has a continuing responsibility in this regard.

What I need to know from you now, Deputy Premier, is whether or not you feel that our province has a continuing responsibility, whether we have to belly up to the bar now and put more money forward. That's what this is all about.

It's one thing to leave Allan Rock out there swinging in the wind, it's another thing for us to assume our responsibility.

My question is, do you or do you not feel that Ontario has a responsibility to put up more money to help hepatitis C victims and to sit down with the federal government and to come up with a better package?

Hon Mr Eves: The province of Ontario is indeed recognizing the ongoing assistance for hepatitis C victims. I just told him that we're spending in the neighbourhood of three quarters of a billion dollars as an ongoing commitment to these victims. If you want to talk about the federal government's role in this, by the way, you might have talked to one of your 101 Liberal colleagues in Ottawa, all of whom supported closing the deal and closing the door on hepatitis C victims. You might also want to talk to your federal government, which reduced health care funding to the province of Ontario by \$2.2 billion. You might also want to talk to your federal government, which this year has a reserve fund of \$3 billion that it's not spending. You might also want to talk to your federal government about spending \$1.2 billion on helicopters that they said they wouldn't spend.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Windsor-Sandwich, come to order. Also, member for York South, come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Come to order, please.

New question; leader of the official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: I'll just take it from that answer that the Deputy Premier is no longer prepared to consider helping in that regard when it comes to our hepatitis C victims living in Ontario.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Ottawa-Rideau, come to order, please.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): Yes, by all means.

The Speaker: I don't want to debate. Just come to order.

HOME CARE

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I have a different question now, Deputy Premier. I have a question about your government's headlong rush into privatized home care in Ontario. Ontarians should know that you changed the rules a short time ago so that shortly 100% of the home care in Ontario could be delivered by the private sector.

What I need to know is how far down that path you're prepared to go. In particular, would you ever consider giving a contract for home care here in Ontario to an American company under investigation for failing to provide adequate care and for health care fraud, also under investigation by organizations like the FBI, the US Department of Justice and the health departments of several US states? Would you ever consider letting a company like this care for Ontario's seniors?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): To the leader of the official opposition, I'm not familiar with the particulars of the question he asked.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Eves: I might add that the Minister of Health fully expected to be here today but was called away at the last minute on a family emergency. I say quite sincerely to the member for Renfrew, I would think twice before I commented before I knew the facts about her absence here today.

I would like to take that question under advisement, or I'd be prepared to allow the leader of the official opposition, if other members would, to stand that question down and ask a different question if he'd prefer.

Mr McGuinty: I don't want to stand this question down. We're going to basic health care policy in this province. I want to give you some of the details now, Deputy Premier. I want to tell you about Olsten Corp. That's the largest private home care organization in the US. That company is currently operating in seven Ontario cities and is just about to sign a contract to operate in Windsor.

Do you know one of the things they've done? They've been found, in the state of Washington, pursuant to a statement of charges — these are charges, now. These charges are drawn from absence or failure to provide adequate care. Here are a couple of examples. One patient was to receive daily glucose and insulin injections for a two-month period. On four days, three of them successive, no visits were made by Olsten staff. Another example: Although the physician was to be notified if the patient's blood pressure fell outside specified parameters, the patient's blood pressure was recorded —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question, please.

Mr McGuinty: — on only five of 14 visits over a two-week period.

Are you aware of these allegations, Deputy Premier, and do you consent to having that company —

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister?

Hon Mr Eves: I'd like to refer this supplementary to the Minister without Portfolio in charge of seniors, who apparently has some knowledge of the issue.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]): I want to advise the honourable member opposite that Ontario has one of the highest standards for monitoring of home care services on the continent. It's a service record that we're very proud of.

He and his own party will know that while they were in government they left a system in this province to a patchwork of service delivery without high standards of performance, which is now today in this province under this government being monitored very carefully. We have put in place a community care access system of 43 centres, with citizens of Ontario managing these boards and supervising the high-quality nursing care that's being delivered to half a million seniors in this province.

I want to assure the member opposite that in no way is this program being operated as it was under the Peterson

era. The standards under the Harris government are much higher, and seniors are aware of that.

Mr McGuinty: I take it, then, from the minister that he is aware of this company, aware of the allegations of wrongdoing in the United States, aware of the specific charges, aware that they're operating here in Ontario and aware that they're about to sign a contract to deliver home care services in Windsor. I take it from all of that that he's aware of that and he has decided that notwithstanding those allegations and those problems they're experiencing to the south of us, it's perfectly all right for this company to carry on business in Ontario and to look after our seniors, our parents and our grandparents.

I just want to acquaint the minister with one thing: President Clinton has decided to place a moratorium on the expansion of privatized home care in his country. He's doing it because of the problems they're encountering there. You don't understand what's happening with your headlong rush into privatized health care in Ontario.

I'm going to ask you once again, Minister, do you condone the operation of this company in our province in delivering home care to our seniors?

Hon Mr Jackson: The member opposite appears to be the only one in this House who is unaware of what is going on in terms of home care over the last 15 years in this province. I want to remind the member opposite —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister?

Hon Mr Jackson: Today in Canada over \$2 billion is being spent in home care, and \$1 billion of it is being spent in this province. We have one of the highest standards of access and one of the highest standards of quality-assured delivery by thousands of nursing professionals in this province.

There are thousands of nurses, nurse practitioners and other health care professionals providing competent, compassionate care all across this province. You are drawing into question the quality of the contribution of these mostly women workers in this province of Ontario. You should be aware that when your government was in power, you awarded six contracts —

Interjections.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): You don't even know about it. Just say you don't know about it. We'll give you the information. Just say you don't know about it. Don't try to BS your way around this.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Ottawa Centre, you must withdraw that comment.

Mr Patten: My comment, "Baloney sauce"? I'll withdraw it.

The Speaker: I didn't hear it that way, and I don't think anyone else did either. Thank you.

Hon Mr Jackson: I want to remind the member opposite that when he was spending one third of what we're spending today, his government awarded six home care contracts to Olsten; that under the NDP they awarded three contracts to this company, when there was no monitoring mechanism. This government is proud of the addi-

tional half a billion dollars that we are committing to home care in this province, and the VON in this province is providing more service today in Ontario than it was a year ago. That's the system we're building in Ontario.

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COMPENSATION FOR HEPATITIS C PATIENTS

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): In the absence of the Minister of Health, I will direct my question to the Deputy Premier. We all know the pain and suffering the victims of Canada's tainted blood system have had to endure. We all know that those victims have been waiting for many years for news on compensation. I and my colleagues know that when we were the government of Ontario our position was that we were going to follow the recommendations of the Krever inquiry.

My question for you today is, why has your government signed an agreement with the federal Liberal government which does not follow the recommendations of the Krever inquiry and which excludes 20,000 to 30,000 victims of tainted blood? Why did you sign that agreement with the federal Liberal government?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I think everybody appreciates the seriousness of the situation with respect to victims of hepatitis C. All provinces, including Ontario, signed an agreement, as you know, with respect to hepatitis C victims after 1986, from 1986 to the 1990 period.

All provinces also, including Ontario — and I indicated this in response to the leader of the official opposition — have been discussing this morning their ongoing help — including Quebec, I might add — to the victims prior to 1986. That help is quite substantial, quite frankly; it is in the billions of dollars. As I said, for Ontario alone we are looking at about three quarters of a billion dollars.

We are urging the federal government now to assume its responsibility in these matters as well. I believe we have the comments of the Deputy Prime Minister yesterday indicating he believes the federal government should be looking at this. I might add that Ontario, along with other provinces, concurs.

Mr Hampton: The now Minister of Health in Ontario told the sufferers of hepatitis C prior to the federal-provincial deal being worked out on February 11, told Hemophilia Ontario, that we would see all infected hemophiliacs being compensated. That is what the now Minister of Health told Hemophilia Ontario. Yet the agreement your government signed with the federal Liberal government does not live up to that. The agreement you signed runs completely contrary to what the now Minister of Health said to Hemophilia Ontario.

I ask that we put a motion before the House today and that we debate that motion so you'll be able to take that to the federal government. Why don't we do that, Minister? Why don't we get to work on this right away and ask the federal Liberal government to reopen the book?

Hon Mr Eves: I am not going to respond, nor should I, on behalf of the Minister of Health. She knows what she said, I don't, and I am not about to respond. She can respond for herself when she is back in her place.

With respect to the second aspect of your question, I would suggest the House leaders discuss this issue the way House leaders discuss the business of the House at any time. However, I do want you to know, as I said in response to your first question, that the province of Ontario is indeed taking the issue seriously, that there have been discussions this morning among all provinces, including the province of Quebec, as to what further help can be given to hepatitis C victims, especially those prior to 1986.

Mr Hampton: Deputy Premier, you are the one who ought to talk to the Minister of Health, because — this is a quote. She said today, on a very influential Toronto radio station, "We are prepared today to support the motion that was passed by the Quebec National Assembly." Then she goes on to say, "I will be writing a letter to the federal government indicating our support for the motion and encouraging them," the federal government, "that the program be extended to all of those people" — "all of those people" meaning the people who have been left out.

What I have just tried to put on the floor of this Legislature is a motion, a motion that would allow us to support what your Minister of Health has just asked for, a motion that would allow your Minister of Health to go back to the federal government and say that 20,000 to 30,000 people are being left out by this compensation package.

Will your government agree to bring on a debate on this motion today so that we can deal with this?

Hon Mr Eves: As I indicated earlier in a response to the leader of the official opposition, the Minister of Health was called away at the last minute today before question period to deal with an emergency family matter. She is not here to respond to what she said today, allegedly, on behalf of the leader of the third party. I'm quite prepared to take that part of his question under advisement and report back or have the minister report back.

With respect to the second aspect of his question, as I said in my previous answer, these matters are scheduled by House leaders. I'd suggest that's the appropriate course to be followed in this instance as well.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question; leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: My next question is also to the Deputy Premier. I would just say to the Deputy Premier that we're prepared to offer support to your Minister of Health, yet your government for some reason doesn't want that support.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My next question: Deputy Premier, your Minister of Health announced yesterday that you were finally going to start putting some money back into the health care system. As we looked at the details of the announcement, you're

essentially saying you're going to put \$150 million back into long-term care. The problem with the announcement is that it ignores the fact that over the last three years you have taken out of hospitals and out of the health care system \$1 billion on an annual basis, and now you're going to put back in \$150 million a year.

Minister, if you've taken out \$1 billion on an annual basis and you're going to put back \$150 million on an annual basis, can you tell me how that's going to get us more beds and more spaces? How does \$150 million in get us more than \$1 billion being taken out?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I can say to the leader of the third party unequivocally that we have not taken money out of the health care system. As a matter of fact, we are spending a record amount on health care in Ontario this year. We have made significant reinvestments in the health care system. In last year's budget alone, we announced \$2.5 billion of reinvestments in the health care system.

Mr Hampton: I'll narrow the issues for the Deputy Premier. What you've done is that you've cut hospitals by over \$600 million a year. That has meant thousands of hospital beds. It has meant the layoffs of thousands of nurses and other health care workers. You've clearly done that. Elsewhere in the health care system, you've taken out \$400 million on an annual basis. It's true that you did put some money back in, for the purpose of paying severance pay to nurses who've been laid off.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Stop the clock, please.

Minister?

Hon Mr Eves: First of all, the announcement the minister and the Premier made earlier this week talks about a reinvestment of \$1.2 billion in seniors' and long-term care in Ontario, putting some 20,000 long-term beds into the system, providing jobs for some 7,900 nurses and 19,000 other health care workers in the province.

I quite agree, we might be in a different position if either one of the other two parties opposite would have done a single thing with respect to long-term care and seniors' care in the 10 years they were in government.

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Mr Hampton: We need to be absolutely clear: What the government did was, it took eight years of funding for long-term care, \$150 million a year, wrapped it into one bundle and said, "Here's \$1.2 billion." The announcement covers eight years, \$150 million a year. You're putting back in \$150 million a year on an annual basis. You took out \$1 billion a year on an annual basis. My question was, how is that going to get us more beds? Putting \$150 million a year back in when you're already on course to take \$1 billion a year out does not get us more beds, unless the other \$850 million is going to come from user fees, co-payment fees, and otherwise the privatization of the long-term-care system. Is that what this is all about, really, Minister? You put \$150 million a year in and the senior citizens and the elderly of this province pay for the rest out

of their pockets? American-style privatized health care, isn't that what this is all about?

Hon Mr Eves: The simple answer to his question is no, that's not what it's all about. What it's all about is providing Ontarians with a restructured health care system that will be in place for many decades to come. Somebody made the comment over there, "You set aside \$2.5 billion in the budget last year for health care restructuring but you haven't done anything." What you did and what you did in the 10 years that you were in power, you eliminated between 10,000 and 11,000 beds in the system, but did nothing about restructuring the system for the future. You didn't care about the care of seniors and long-term care in the province of Ontario.

To date we have made reinvestments of \$1,893,352,000, ranging from \$7.5 million at Barrie Royal Victoria Hospital, \$3.35 million for the Markdale nursing home, \$750,000 for the Stratford nursing home. I can go on and on. I can read off the whole list if you want, but the list totals — except the Speaker wouldn't let me. Sorry, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: I'm not letting you actually total it, either. New question.

HOME CARE

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I would like to go back to the minister responsible for senior citizens about the question of privatization of home nursing visits in Ontario. What the minister neglected to tell the House in his first answers is that investigations of this company started in 1995, are being conducted in four American jurisdictions, deal with very serious charges around improper billing, improper care and ought to be responded to. Will the minister give this House his assurance today that no further contracts with Olsten Corp will be let by a CCAC in Ontario, or will he abdicate the government's responsibility in this province to protect our parents and grandparents until these serious issues are resolved in the United States? Will the minister stand up and protect seniors in this province?

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]): The member opposite is calling into question the citizens of Windsor who serve on the Windsor Community Care Access Centre board. That is what he is calling into question. The fact is that community care is not spent directly by the province of Ontario, it is handed to the community board in Windsor, those good citizens, many of them themselves seniors, handicapped members of the Windsor community, persons who have used community support services. That board is the one that lets the contracts out and examines the quality of care, ensures that those nurses, your neighbours in your own community, your constituents, who are working for these companies all across Ontario, are providing the highest quality of care.

We're very proud of the fact that these companies in this province and all service providers are providing the highest levels of care and the highest levels of access for

any Canadians at all. We're proud of that record and we'll continue to support our community care access centres in the work they do for the seniors of this province.

Mr Duncan: The minister obviously is not even aware of his own ability to influence these decisions. Check your own statutes, review the decisions and don't allow them to sign a contract until such time as these serious allegations are looked after. In fact, you are hurting nurses. We have the support of the nursing community in our city.

Minister, if this is such an open process, why won't your government allow the CCACs to release the contracts? Will you allow them? Will you stand today in the House and say that you're interested in protecting that organization in Windsor? Will you allow them to release the contract they're about to sign or will you continue to keep that in private? We have attempted to get those contracts from seven different communities in this province and have been told repeatedly that your government won't allow them to release the information. What are you hiding? Why won't you stand up and protect the seniors in my community, in your community, right across this province? Do what's right: Exert your authority and exert it properly.

Hon Mr Jackson: The members opposite have a pretty selective memory. I recall in the last election that not only did they support expanding community-based care, they supported the use of community care access centres and they agreed to support the RFP, request for proposal, process. The RFP proposal guidelines established by this government clearly state that there is a debriefing process and that information is to be shared.

I want to remind the member opposite that it was his leader, Lyn McLeod, leader of the Liberal Party, whom he was campaigning for in the last election, who said on June 28, 1993, "Everything I hear from seniors, from their families, is that the private sector is providing quality services and people are satisfied with the kinds of services they're getting." That's from your own leader and your own party in the last election.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My next question is also for the Deputy Premier, in view of the fact that the Minister of Health is not here.

Yesterday I met with a very sick young boy and his mother in London, Ontario, and also the physician who has treated him. This young boy went to the children's hospital in London in very ill condition. He was told there was no bed, so they put him in the emergency ward. Then he was sent home and he got sicker and he got an infection, which created an even worse situation. The long and the short of this is that as a result of the fact that there was no bed for him and they could not treat him, he has had to spend close to 55 days in hospital. He's been very ill; he's been near death.

Can you tell me what your announcement yesterday will do for this young boy and the many other young chil-

dren across this province who can't get a bed at a hospital like this?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I'm not going to respond in a political way at all because I think it's a very serious situation he's talking about. I'd be more than happy to take the question under advisement, to receive the particulars that the member may have and make sure the Ministry of Health has those particulars so the matter can be followed up on.

1440

Mr Hampton: I thank you for your offer on that. This particular mother actually asked the Premier to come down to London and spend just a little bit of time to see what's happening to her son and the other children who are in that ward in that particular hospital. The point the mother makes and the point the physician makes is that many times at the sick children's hospital in London, children have had to sit in the emergency ward because there are no beds and other patients have had to sit in the emergency ward because there are no beds. In other situations, when there has been a bed they haven't had sufficient funding to staff the bed with a qualified nurse, which means that the bed sits empty in that case.

This is about the fact that hundreds of millions of dollars have been removed from hospitals across this province, and this is one of the hospitals. The nurses who used to be there aren't there any more. She wants to know, and people all across Ontario want to know, what does the announcement that you made yesterday mean for this child and hundreds of others like him across the province?

Hon Mr Eves: Any announcement with respect to long-term-care beds or seniors' beds obviously is going to free up more acute care beds in the hospital system.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): In eight years' time.

Hon Mr Eves: The member for Beaches-Woodbine says, "In eight years' time." I quite agree; it's too bad that the province of Ontario didn't embark upon this 10 years ago, nine years ago, eight years ago etc. We have put \$1.2 billion, a significant investment, into long-term care. Sure, it is spent over a number of years. Physically, you couldn't spend the \$1.2 billion in one year if you had every construction company available in the world. I agree, that's why the planning for this should have started 10 years ago, but it didn't, so we have assumed the responsibility and we are dealing with the problem.

With respect to the very specific issue the leader of the third party is raising, with respect to this individual, I believe it is a very serious situation he raises. As I said to him quite sincerely, I'm prepared to take the facts back to the Ministry of Health and try to get him an appropriate response. But I do want to make clear that we are making significant reinvestments in the health care system. In responding to the health restructuring commission's recommendations alone —

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

WILD TURKEY HUNT

Mr Bill Grimmer (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. On Friday evening in Midland, the Georgian Bay Hunters and Anglers club celebrated its 75th anniversary. I was present at the dinner. There was a lot of discussion at that dinner about the wild turkey hunt which is currently under way in Ontario. It's my understanding that the wild turkey hunt this year has been extended to further areas and that there's a higher limit per hunter. Could you provide the House with a report on that, please?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): I want to congratulate the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay for attending that 75th anniversary last weekend. I'm sure his constituents were pleased by his presence. I'm happy to report to him that he's quite right; there have been some very big changes to the turkey hunt this year, some very significant changes in the hunt. In fact, beginning this year there will be a two-bird bag limit for bearded wild turkey for all wildlife management units that have a wild turkey hunt.

I notice that the members opposite, including the member for Scarborough North, are worried about a turkey hunt that doesn't cover the Legislature. Alvin, it's fine.

Another change that's significant is that the hunting season will be extended until May 31, and the hunt has been expanded as well. We've added two new seasons this year, for Leeds-Grenville and Huron. Those are added to the 22 wildlife units that had a hunt last year.

I believe the turkey hunt is on again this year; it has been expanded. We have an increased bird limit this year — a lot more hunting opportunities for people in Ontario.

Mr Grimmer: My supplementary also relates to the wild turkey hunt. It's my understanding that there are a lot more wild turkeys evident not only in the wild turkey hunt area but also in other parts of the province.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. The member has the right to place the question and be —

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Lake Nipigon, please come to order. It's a question about wild turkeys. Please come to order.

Mr Grimmer: Thank you, Mr Speaker. The other day I was driving just west of Bracebridge on a country road and I saw five wild turkeys. This is evidence that the population is much higher than it was in 1984. Are the new hunting opportunities the result of a larger population of wild turkeys in Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. You know what, government members? I'm going to stop the clock next time. I can't hear, and I think it's from this side. Minister?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I'm sure the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay, as do I, appreciates all the help from the members of the House in addressing this question. I particularly want to thank the turkeys in the press gallery for

sending down a little note that might help me in addressing this, a comment I may pay for at some point in the future.

But I do want to address the question, because I think it's important. The increase in the hunt this year for wild turkeys is a result of some conservation efforts on behalf of the Ministry of Natural Resources and some of our partners many years ago. The Federation of Ontario Naturalists and the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, together with the Ministry of Natural Resources, years ago began to reintroduce these birds that were hunted to extinction at the turn of the century. As a matter of fact, by the mid-1980s a total of 274 birds had been reintroduced into Ontario, and effective this year I'm pleased to say that the population has grown to some 17,000, which has allowed us to expand this hunt.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I have a question for the Deputy Prime Minister. Today your government is closing down another hospital emergency department. Today you're shutting down the emergency department of Toronto's Doctors Hospital. You're ordering this unique neighbourhood hospital to shut its doors to emergency medical needs after 109 years of serving the emergency needs of patients. This community hospital has served some of the poorest people in the city and people of very diverse cultural backgrounds; in fact, 58% of the people who have relied on this good hospital were born outside of Canada.

Given the ongoing emergency crisis, with patients lined up on stretchers in hospital corridors and ambulances carrying patients being redirected from hospital to hospital, why would you close down another emergency department? Where will these 12,000 patients who relied on Doctors Hospital now go?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I'm not aware of the exact particulars of the event he's talking about today, but I am aware of course, and so is he, I hope, that the Minister of Health recently announced a \$255-million initiative, of which a considerable amount of that money was specifically directed towards alleviating the problems in emergency rooms all over Ontario. If the emergency ward at Doctors Hospital is closing, it's my understanding that those patients who used to go there will now be going to Western.

1450

Mr Colle: When the issue of a crisis in emergency closures in Toronto and the lineups in emergency departments was brought up last January, your government said that the cause of this was probably the January flu. Now you are repeating the same mistake. Not only have you closed the emergency at Northwestern, not only have you closed the emergency at Branson at 10 o'clock and also the emergency at Wellesley Hospital, now you're going to close another one, and your announcement earlier this week won't really take effect for another eight years perhaps.

The question I'm asking today is, how does this make any sense to the patients who are now waiting in these hallways in our hospitals here in Metro? Where are they going to go? Are they still going to be redirected en route from hospital to hospital, just bounced around in the ambulances? Where will they go?

Hon Mr Eves: At the end of the day, as a result of the restructuring commission's suggestions, the city of Toronto will actually receive an updated or an increased annual emergency room capacity of some 600,000 cases a year. That is where the government is going in terms of restructuring the health care system in Ontario and with respect to emergency rooms in the city of Toronto specifically.

DISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question for the Attorney General. On Monday your colleague Bob Runciman, who was Solicitor General, stood in the Legislature and announced his resignation from cabinet in view of the impending RCMP investigation. In fact, I can quote him. He said:

"That being said, I understand that the leader of the third party has asked for an investigation by the RCMP into this matter. I remain willing to offer whatever assistance I can to that process. In the meantime, given my respect for the office I've held for the past two and a half years and my high regard for the laws of our country, I believe I should step aside during this process."

A criminal investigation is now under way. We understand that investigation includes looking into the conduct of the Premier's staff, so can you tell me why Bob Runciman is taking the fall? Why is he the only person stepping aside? Why is no one in the Premier's office taking an unpaid leave of absence during this criminal investigation?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): The honourable member asks me questions that lead obviously into discussions about details of a particular situation over which allegations have been made. The police are investigating the allegations, and it would be inappropriate to make any comments.

Mr Hampton: This has got nothing to do with what the RCMP may be doing; this has got to do with the fact that a cabinet minister has been lined up to take the fall for the whole government. We know that that cabinet minister, Bob Runciman, did not write the throne speech. We know that Deb Hutton in the Premier's office helped to write the throne speech; she has given that comment to the media. We know that Guy Giorno in the Premier's office wrote the throne speech; he has given that comment to the media.

Bob Runciman did the right thing. He said: "I may be implicated in this. I will stand aside." Why is he the fall guy? Why haven't the whiz kids in the Premier's office, Guy Giorno, Deb Hutton, done the proper thing? Why aren't they taking an unpaid leave of absence while this

investigation looks at their conduct as well? Can you tell us that?

Hon Mr Harnick: Again, these are questions that would, I would think, be part of an investigation that the police are doing, and it would be inappropriate to comment.

WORKFARE

Mr John L. Parker (York East): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. We have been hearing a lot in the news recently about your Ontario Works program. In fact, in the speech from the throne, there were a number of highlights of some of the numerous success stories of the program. I want to congratulate you on the success you are having in reforming the welfare system in this province, but there's a question I want to ask.

There has been an item in the paper recently that has prompted a number of questions to my constituency office. The story indicates that you have recently travelled to the States, specifically Wisconsin, on the subject of welfare reform, so I wanted to pass along to you the question that has come to me from my constituents. Why have you been travelling outside the province on this matter and why, in particular, Wisconsin?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): One of the things that has been very encouraging as I have travelled around the province and listened and met with municipalities and people who are on welfare to ask them about the program is to listen to the success stories from those individuals who are indeed getting themselves off welfare and into paid jobs.

Before we began the program we'd consulted with Canadian and American jurisdictions that have workfare programs in place. Now that the municipal infrastructure is in place for delivering Ontario Works, our mandatory work-for-welfare program, now that the legislation is in place, we are saying, "Where should we go from here?" and we are talking to jurisdictions that can provide us with that advice.

Wisconsin has just unveiled a fairly significant new version of their workfare plan. As you may know, they have been in the business of providing work-for-welfare programs since the late 1980s, so I thought it was appropriate to go down and see what we could learn from that jurisdiction about what works for them.

Mr Parker: Thank you, Minister, and I appreciate the research you've put into this subject. I wonder if you can tell us just what are some of the important differences between the program in place in Wisconsin and the program that you're introducing here in Ontario.

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, I think it's important to note that it is a different jurisdiction with different laws and a different sort of legal culture, if you will. We do have here and we'll continue to have a made-in-Ontario work-for-welfare program, but a couple of things they are doing are quite interesting.

First of all, their partnership with community agencies and private sector employers is working really well. They actually have non-profit community agencies, even church groups, that help them deliver their welfare. They have a really good partnership with potential private sector employers, and it seems to be working extremely well. We're interested in seeing if that would work here in Ontario.

The second important focus is their focus on families on welfare and as a matter of fact in Wisconsin their work-for-welfare plans are just for families, not for what we would call single employables. Some of the things they are doing to support families to get into the workplace faster I think are child care supports, for example, tax policies —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question.

HOMELESSNESS

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): My question is to the same minister, the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, you and your Tory cuts have created one of the worst social housing crises this province has ever seen. More and more people are living on the streets. You see it in every city in the province and the numbers are growing.

According to the United Way, the number of homeless increased by 67% in the last year alone. The results of your insensitive management are in the face of each homeless person. Your government is trying to spin good news now with what you are calling a major reinvestment in health care. Will you help those today that you have made homeless? People are being forced out of the psychiatric hospitals with nowhere to go. You've wiped out social housing. Your government has not responded to the demand for affordable housing. In addition, you've also cut social welfare by 22%. What action, Minister, are you willing to take now today to respond to the homeless tragedy that you have caused?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): As you know, meeting the needs of individuals who are homeless is a shared responsibility between the province and the municipalities. We have had a province-wide task force led by my parliamentary assistant, Jack Carroll, who has been meeting with the municipalities to see how we can do more to help support what in many cases are very, very complex needs that those individuals who may find themselves homeless can have. It may range through everything from mental health issues to substance abuse issues and we have heard that message very strongly from those agencies that deal with people who are homeless, that we need a lot of different support mechanisms to make sure we can better serve those people who have that particular challenge.

Mr Curling: It is your government that has caused this crisis. My colleague Sandra Pupatello from Windsor-Sandwich passed on a report from Windsor city council to me that outlines all the costs of emergency hostels are now being downloaded from the province to the municipality. Your government is passing the buck to cities to care for those needing emergency shelters, the poor, the elderly,

the physically and developmentally challenged without financial support. This is another blow for those seeking basic shelter. The moral responsibility lies with this government, with you, Minister, to look after those in our society who need help.

Now you're telling me it's rather complex. You have made it complex. It's a basic need that these people have and you're telling me too that the Jack Carroll rodeo show that goes around to hear people, to have more task forces, will resolve this matter. A task force will not resolve this matter. We all know what the problem is. It is your responsibility. The financial support is needed by you, the provincial government, not passing the buck to the city.

Tell me, Minister, what are you going to do today about the homeless and the crisis you have created in this province?

Hon Mrs Ecker: With all due respect to my honourable colleague, I would caution him about relying on the research of his colleague from Windsor if this is evidence of what she has given him.

We do cost-share emergency hostels in this province. That has not changed. That is not changing. There has not been a reduction in that budget. There is no cap on that budget. We continue to pay that as the need dictates. So I would really caution him to get his facts straight about that.

Secondly, the response Mr Carroll has been getting back from many community agencies, from the municipalities, as he's been consulting is that it's not a question of needing more money. We have put more and we're prepared to put more money into some of those supports. They are saying the problem is that so much of that money is getting wasted in the needless duplication between different ministry departments, between the provincial and municipal governments. So they're recommending to us that we need to get rid of some of those barriers so that money can do a better job. I look forward to those recommendations from the task force so that our government can act on them.

1500

LAND USE PLANNING

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I have a question for the Minister of Natural Resources regarding your Lands for Life process. Since the inception of this particular land use planning process, the concern by members of the public about it has been growing. We have a number of concerns from a number of aboriginal communities that feel they've been completely left out of important decisions to be made on land use planning, particularly on traditional lands; many members of the public, particularly in southern Ontario, who are concerned that they don't have adequate input and opportunities for participation; and thirdly, a very serious concern, which is growing, that there is not enough time for people to adequately have their say with respect to the various options that are coming forward from the round table.

Will you commit today in this House that the time line for recommendations to you on land use options will be extended? There have been rumours that you are thinking about extending this until October. Will you commit today to extend this process to the members of the round table?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): I want to thank the member opposite for the question. There is a lot of public interest in Lands for Life, as there should be. People across the province are very interested in the land use policy for this province on into the future and obviously many people are enjoying the opportunity, in a very public process, of deciding on that policy. The volunteers who are the round tables, the people from mostly northern communities who have got together, who have direct daily stewardship over these lands, have been engaged in the public over the course of the last few months on a variety of options for Ontario.

I'm proud to say to the member opposite today that we have extended the deadline for the Lands for Life process once already. I have recently met with the chairs of the round tables to talk to them about their proposals for extending it again. I was able to tell them that we will in fact honour their request, which is that their submission at the end of June will come in draft form to the minister. We will also work with them over the course of the next month on a further public consultation process, post the bringing in of that draft. So that's under way right now.

Ms Martel: I don't think having the draft in in the short time that you've requested is going to do it. You know that across northern Ontario record numbers of people from communities have been coming out to these public meetings because they are very concerned about the various options that have been put forward. They are particularly concerned because there has been no economic analysis done of any of the various options which the round tables are putting towards the public. So people in the mining industry, people in the forestry industry, environmentalists, OFAH, people who are involved in remote tourism are all concerned about what the economic impact will be, and your ministry and the round tables have not done that work.

I ask you again, will you commit today to extend the public part of this process until October so that the public can have a look at the options that are put forward, and will you also commit that all of the options will have economic analyses attached to them so all of the stakeholders can understand what's at stake here?

Hon Mr Snobelen: Again, I want to thank the member for the opportunity to bring this forward to the House today because I think it is important. I think this is a very important public policy for Ontario and for future generations.

As I said a moment ago, I have been working in cooperation with the chairs of our round tables and I have agreed that instead of submitting a final report, they will submit a draft in June to us and we'll work with them between now and that time on a further public consultation process, some of which will involve the economic impacts

and obviously the ecological impacts of good land use planning in Ontario.

There has been a lot of interest, particularly in northern Ontario but also in southern Ontario, in this public land process. Many of the people I've talked to in northern parts of Ontario have expressed to me thanks for our government taking this position of having a public process, of not doing what your government did in the past, just decreeing public land use process, but actually inviting the public in, actually listening to their opinions and actually listening to what's important to them. I'm glad we're doing that.

TRUCKING SAFETY

Mr Trevor Pettit (Hamilton Mountain): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Over the last few years we've all heard the media reports about unsafe trucks on our roads. I've had many constituents in my riding high atop panoramic Hamilton Mountain call my office expressing their concern over the safety of big trucks on the road. They too, through the media, have heard the news reports about truck blitzes, as you well know.

I'd like to be able to update my constituents about what is happening with truck safety, so could you please tell me what your ministry has done to combat unsafe trucks and tell us about some of the initiatives you've taken, in particular some of the things such as the 24-hour, seven-day-a-week truck inspection stations and also truck impoundment.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Transportation): Indeed safe roadways are important, for a number of reasons. Of course it means safety for individuals, it enhances our quality of life and it also increases our economic trade.

Our government has introduced a number of truck safety initiatives. First, with respect to truck impoundment, Ontario became the first jurisdiction in North America, on February 2 of this year, to have truck impoundments for critically defective commercial vehicles. Trucks will be impounded for 15 days for a first offence, 30 days for a second and 60 days for a third. There are in fact 10 truck impoundment facilities across the province open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and we have hired 80 additional truck inspection officers to work on these stations.

The record since February 2 has been that MTO officers have impounded 42 commercial vehicles. This number is lower than we had originally expected, but I believe it shows that the bad operators are getting the message that it does not pay to have unsafe trucks on the road in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mr Clement: Indeed, we have done a number of other things such as increasing fines for commercial safety offenders, the absolute liability offence for truck wheel separations, all of which is improving —

The Speaker: Thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

VETERANS' MEMORIAL PARKWAY ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LA PROMENADE COMMÉMORATIVE DES ANCIENS COMBATTANTS

Mr Baird moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 10, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act to name Highway 416 Veterans' Memorial Parkway / Projet de loi 10, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun pour nommer la voie publique 416 Promenade commémorative des anciens combattants.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

ENDANGERED, THREATENED AND VULNERABLE SPECIES ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LES ESPÈCES VULNÉRABLES, MENACÉES OU EN VOIE DE DISPARITION

Mr Wildman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 11, An Act to revise the Endangered Species Act and to protect Threatened and Vulnerable Species / Projet de loi 11, Loi révisant la Loi sur les espèces en voie de disparition et visant à protéger les espèces vulnérables et les espèces menacées.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

A short comment?

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): The purpose of the bill is to replace the Endangered Species Act. The act currently provides protection to endangered species of animals and plants. The bill extends this protection to threatened and vulnerable species. A committee may be established to advise the Minister of Natural Resources as to which species should be declared endangered, threatened or vulnerable and as to possible recovery plans to ensure survival of these species.

The minister may acquire land or enter into land management agreements with a view to protecting such designated species and their habitats.

1510

NORTHERN SERVICES IMPROVEMENT ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION DES SERVICES PUBLICS DANS LE NORD DE L'ONTARIO

Mr Hodgson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 12, An Act to provide choice and flexibility to Northern Residents in the establishment of service deliv-

ery mechanisms that recognize the unique circumstances of Northern Ontario and to allow increased efficiency and accountability in Area-wide Service Delivery / Projet de loi 12, Loi visant à offrir aux résidents du Nord plus de choix et de souplesse dans la mise en place de mécanismes de prestation des services qui tiennent compte de la situation unique du Nord de l'Ontario et à permettre l'accroissement de l'efficacité et de la responsabilité en ce qui concerne la prestation des services à l'échelle régionale.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I am standing here today to speak in support of charitable organizations all across the province, including those in my home town of Thunder Bay, and against this government's repeated and cruel attacks on these hardworking organizations.

Last year the government quietly increased their take of proceeds from charitable bingos. Then in January by regulation they started grabbing millions of dollars through a 5% tax on each box of break-open tickets sold by our Ontario charities. Finally, on April 1 the government callously halted the operation of roving casinos, depriving charities of millions of dollars in much-needed revenue.

This government's sneaky moves to line their own pockets at the expense of charitable organizations must stop. Now we have learned that the government has stopped providing any funds to the Ontario Trillium Foundation, which provides crucial support to social service groups in my community and across the province, until the casino money starts rolling in.

As a result, members of our caucus are alarmed at the recent appointment of highly political friends of Mike Harris to the Trillium Foundation, to this arm's-length government agency. These friends include the mother of a former staffer in the Premier's office and a golfing buddy of the Premier. It is vitally important that all future funding by the Trillium Foundation remains above reproach. That is why it is crucial that it remains a truly arm's-length organization.

Premier, for the sake of the credibility of this important organization, cancel your political appointments and return the foundation to its rightful place as a non-political entity with board members from all across the province, including northwestern Ontario. Our charities truly deserve better from this government.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): The property tax assessment and the elimination of the business occupancy

tax caused consternation in our community when retailers and small businesses discovered that their taxes were going to increase by as much as 700%, well beyond their ability to pay.

When the government was faced with an open revolt by small businesses, they scrambled for a solution. What they came up with, capping the increase at 2.5% per year for the next three years, is a Band-Aid. It only postpones the problem. The business property tax remains, a time bomb set to explode three years from now when the next provincial assessment takes place.

Let me show you the level of concern in our community. Here we have these letters, 300 or so coming from the Toronto Eaton Centre alone. Most of the businesses in the Eaton Centre are small franchise operations that have to compete with other small businesses on main streets. The Harris government's suggestions that municipalities adopt graduated rates for different classes of buildings would result in these businesses being taxed at the highest rate just because they are in a shopping mall. The retailers in the Eaton Centre are right when they say that this is not fair and that it will destroy their ability to compete.

We need a real solution. Toronto businesses should not have to pay twice as much for education as their neighbours elsewhere in the GTA. Services like welfare and social housing should be paid for out of income taxes, not property taxes. Reassessment implementation should be suspended for one year so that we can get it right.

ICE STORM

Mr W. Leo Jordan (Lanark-Renfrew): I rise in the House today to recognize the courage and heroism of those who kept people and communities alive through the disastrous impacts of the January ice storm in eastern Ontario.

We are all aware of the devastation suffered by households, farmers and businesses which went without power for as long as 16 days and fought severe temperatures and heartbreaking property damage as the lifestyle we take for granted became a matter of survival.

Our survival was made possible by volunteers and community leaders who gave of their time, talents and resources 24 hours a day. I must note the exceptional concerted efforts of the Canadian Armed Forces, Ontario Hydro, municipalities, fire departments, legions and countless members of Ontario's corporate community.

I also want to thank the Premier, the cabinet and all members for the unreserved commitment of financial resources, moral support and recognition of volunteers.

Without even factoring in the recent floods, we are still far from recovery, but having witnessed the tremendous amount of cooperation and community building, I know the task will be done.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): We've already begun to see the impact of this government's funding

formula with the layoff of hundreds of educational assistants across the province. We're now starting to see the effect of Mike Harris's control of education in the proposed closure of schools in every community.

Just in case anyone wants to argue that this is a decision the school boards are making, let me make it clear. School closings are being forced by the government's cuts in funding. This government decided in its wisdom that it could save money by limiting the number of square feet per student that boards would be allowed to maintain. This has the effect of instantly creating hundreds of thousands of apparently excess unneeded spaces in our schools.

It's not that there aren't students in those spaces; there are. These are not empty classrooms. But the government won't pay to heat or light or clean them any more, so the board will have to move the students out to somewhere else.

The Halton Board of Education now finds it has 600,000 square feet of this newly defined extra space, so it has to figure out how to close about 10 schools, supposedly by September when the funding cut hits. But the added problem for Halton is that they have 186 portable classrooms and these have an apparently growing problem with mould. Half of these may have to close too. So what does Halton do with all the students? Can they keep the 10 schools open and bus the children in the mouldy portables into these schools, wherever they may be, or will they be forced to close 10 schools and fit the children in the mouldy portables into whatever space is left?

Unanswered questions, equally intolerable choices and a whole lot of kids and families about to face a move that they don't —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Statements?

DENTAL CARE

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): Today Dr Michael Sigal, president of the Ontario Society of Pediatric Dentists, and a number of other organizations pointed out that when tomorrow the government proclaims its new Ontario Works Act, one of the changes that will take place is that 600,000 children and people with disabilities will lose important dental coverage.

As Dr Sigal pointed out, the current program permits patients to choose their treating dentists. The new dental plan eliminates and reduces access to many of the treatments that are necessary to meet the oral health care needs of these vulnerable people.

He also pointed out that the plan will download responsibility and costs of many services to municipal health units, which are quite frankly not equipped to meet the special treatment needs of people with disabilities, and that travelling to clinics will be a problem for many patients.

He went on to also point out that the government's new plan fails to cover some important procedures. For example, children suffering from trauma to the front teeth are not covered and dentists would have to receive preauthorization before performing emergency procedures.

As if that wasn't enough, they also point out that the new plan moves away from the current focus on prevention and also the new plan, as a result of the changes, is going to be more expensive because right now people can go to a dentist of their choosing. Under the new plan they will have to go to clinics which in many places don't exist, will have to be set up, and therefore will end up costing the taxpayers more.

I join this group as they ask the minister to pause on this and change the course of action before it's too late.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): Yesterday I had the pleasure of welcoming to my riding of Etobicoke-Humber Premier Mike Harris, the health minister, Elizabeth Witmer, and the minister responsible for seniors, Cam Jackson, who together announced an expansion of \$1.2 billion in funding to long-term care.

Not only does this announcement increase health care funding; it lets people in Ontario know that our government is responding to the calls for assistance from health care professionals which the previous two governments had failed to answer.

With the average age of the population increasing rapidly, our government recognizes the need for additional long-term-care funding and has responded accordingly. Perhaps my friends across the floor who failed to listen to the health care community when their party was in government should open their ears and listen to what health care professionals are saying now.

Carol Jarman, executive director of the Ukrainian Care Centre, where the announcement was made, had this observation:

"This announcement is a tremendous step forward in the restructuring of the provincial health care system. The Ontario government clearly understands that the vision for an effective health care system includes long-term care as a crucial piece of the restructuring puzzle."

I want to thank Carol and the other caregivers in Etobicoke for their valuable input that led to this decision. Together, our plan to return prosperity to Ontario is working.

1520

NATURAL GAS SUPPLIERS

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): My remarks are addressed to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. This is the second time I am bringing to his attention the deplorable actions of some natural gas brokers. This is the second time I have brought to his attention many complaints I have received.

As a matter of fact, today I was very pleased that the minister brought to my attention a letter he received on one of the complaints I had brought to his office. The case involved a number of natural gas brokers and the attitude they use towards many thousands of Ontario consumers, and it comes in many aspects. One of those is forwarding

a cheque, usually in a very low amount, some \$10 or \$12, representing a refund or a bonus, which is nothing more than an enticement to join the particular company, unaware that once the cheque is cashed the contract is assigned to the new company and usually goes for a period of five years. What happens is that the gas they receive is usually at a much more expensive rate per cubic metre than that of the previous supplier.

Due to the absence of any protection in the legislation, I am calling on the minister to introduce legislation which would bring relief and protection for thousands of consumers in Ontario.

HAMILTON POLICE CHIEF

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I'm very proud and pleased to stand in my place today and report on an important matter that has taken place in my home town of Hamilton-Wentworth this morning. We held ceremonies for the change of command from our outgoing police chief, Bob Middaugh, to our incoming police chief, Ken Robertson.

I want to first comment on Bob Middaugh. Of course, I worked with Chief Middaugh, both as a local member in Hamilton but also during my time as Solicitor General, when Bob was not only our local chief but was also president of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police. I can say to this House, and would say so anywhere at any time, that I think Bob Middaugh is one of the most decent, honest, committed individuals in policing or any other walk of public life that I've ever had the pleasure to work with, and he leaves a tremendous vacuum for incoming Chief Robertson to fill.

Ken Robertson, on his part, has played a leadership role as a deputy chief, certainly very much committed to community policing, where I believe our police service has played a leading role, and I think that he, among a very few in this entire province, is someone of such of a calibre that he can fill those shoes left by Bob Middaugh. I would ask members of this House, in a non-partisan way, to join me in wishing incoming Police Chief Ken Robertson good luck.

WAYNE MIDDAGH

Mr Bill Grimmert (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I'd like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to a constituent of mine, Wayne Middaugh, for skipping the Canadian team to victory in the World Curling Championships recently held in Kamloops, British Columbia.

Wayne and his rink defeated the defending champion, Peter Lindholm of Sweden, 7-4 to win the title. This is the second world championship for Middaugh, who curled second on the 1993 world championship rink, skipped by another constituent of mine, Russ Howard of Midland.

Wayne is a resident of the village of Victoria Harbour on Georgian Bay and is the golf professional at Midland Golf and Country Club. He takes a great interest in youth curling, and between his victory in the Canadian Brier and

the world championships I had the pleasure to attend a banquet at the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations' high school curling championship in Midland, where Wayne was the guest speaker. He's clearly a great role model and an inspiration for young curlers.

Wayne is a year-round resident in Muskoka-Georgian Bay, where curling is an integral part of winter life. Nearly every village and town in my riding is equipped with a curling facility enjoyed by people of all ages.

My constituents and I are proud of Wayne Middaugh, and tonight his community will pay tribute to him. He's an outstanding ambassador for curling in Muskoka-Georgian Bay, for the province of Ontario and throughout the world, and he's now the reigning world curling champion.

PETITIONS

DISPONIBILITÉ D'UNE ÉCOLE

Mr Gilles E. Morin (Carleton East): I have a petition signed by 569 of my constituents. It reads as follows:

«À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

«Attendu qu'il n'existe aucune école française dans le quartier de Chapel Hill à Gloucester ;

«Attendu que la demande pour une école francophone et catholique au sein de Chapel Hill est évidente et pressante ;

«Nous, les soussignés, pétitionnons l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario comme suit :

«De libérer des fonds pour permettre la construction d'une nouvelle école catholique française à Gloucester dans le secteur de Chapel Hill.»

J'y ai affixé ma signature.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a petition signed by approximately 100 residents of various parts of the province. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the government of Ontario has not listened to the public on Bill 160; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has chosen to overtly deceive the people of Ontario as to the true objectives of Bill 160; and

"Whereas we, the people, believe no government has a mandate to act in isolation of the wishes of the electorate of this province and we have lost confidence in the government;

"We, the undersigned electors of Ontario, petition the Lieutenant Governor to dissolve the Legislature and call a general election forthwith."

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): I have a petition signed by a number of students in Niagara-on-the-Lake, St Catharines and the Niagara region which reads:

"We, the undersigned students of the province of Ontario and their parents, respectfully request that the philosophy of neighbourhood schools be maintained, and that should it be necessary to close schools, the consultation process be recognized and enforced, allowing time for debate and discussion."

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which I'd like to read.

"Whereas nurses in Ontario often experience coercion to participate in practices which directly contravene their deeply held ethical standards;

"Whereas pharmacists in Ontario are often pressured to dispense and/or sell chemicals and/or devices contrary to their moral or religious beliefs;

"Whereas public health workers in Ontario are expected to assist in providing controversial services and promoting controversial materials against their consciences;

"Whereas physicians in Ontario often experience pressure to give referrals for medications, treatments and/or procedures which they believe to be gravely immoral;

"Whereas competent health care workers and students in various health care disciplines in Ontario have been denied training, employment, continued employment, and advancement in their intended fields, and suffered other forms of unjust discrimination because of the dictates of their consciences; and

"Whereas health care workers experiencing such unjust discrimination have at present no practical and accessible legal means to protect themselves;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers; prohibiting coercion of and unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary to the dictates of their consciences; and establishing penalties for such coercion and unjust discrimination."

I agree with the content of the petition, and I will affix my signature to it.

1530

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition forwarded to me by Ted Mansell, who is the occupational health and safety coordinator for the Service Employees International Union. It's signed by members of theirs from across the province. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas each year in Ontario approximately 300 workers are killed on the job, several thousand die of

occupational diseases and 400,000 suffer work-related injuries and illnesses; and

"Whereas during the past decade the Workers' Health and Safety Centre proved to be the most cost-effective WCB-funded prevention organization dedicated to worker health and safety concerns; and

"Whereas the WCB provides over 80% of its legislated prevention funding to several employer-controlled safety associations and less than 20% to the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre recently lost several million dollars in funding and course revenue due to government changes to legislated training requirements; and

"Whereas 30% of Workers' Health and Safety Centre staff were laid off due to these lost training funds; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre now faces an additional 25% cut to its 1998 budget, which will be used to augment new funding for employer safety associations in the health, education and service sectors; and

"Whereas the WCB's 1998 planned baseline budget cuts for safety associations and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre will be disproportionately against the workers' centre and reduce its 1998 budget allocation to less than 15% of the WCB prevention funding,

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the WCB's proposed cuts and direct the WCB to increase the Workers' Health and Safety Centre's funding to at least 50% of the WCB's legislated prevention funding; and

"Further we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the WCB to significantly increase its legislated prevention funding in order to eliminate workplace illness, injury and death."

I proudly add my name to those of these petitioners.

CURRICULUM

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I have a petition signed by 5,692 people. I believe it's the largest petition presented to date in this session. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas the Ministry of Education is initiating secondary school curriculum reform in light of the compression of five years into four, we would recommend that the following be enacted into provincial legislation:

"(1) The ministry recognize that the topic of origins is faith-based. Since evolutionism and creationism are completed acts in the past, neither can be proven nor disproven. Consequently both are religious by nature. In fairness to the parents and students of Ontario, equal instruction time should be given in presenting the underlying assumptions of each. Through the two-model approach, the skills of critical thinking, such as recognition of bias, awareness of society's influence on one's bias and the awareness of assumptions can allow students to ex-

amine their own belief systems and better appreciate an opposing view.

"(2) The ministry, through in-service training, should encourage senior administrators, principals and teachers to familiarize themselves with this two-model assumptional approach and the accompanying skills of critical thinking.

"(3) The ministry begin the process of mandating that all textbooks dealing with the topic of origins in both the social and pure sciences (ie history, geography, biology and geology) should reflect the two-model assumptional approach before being included in circular 14."

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a similar petition to the one I introduced before, but slightly different. This one might be in order.

"Whereas the government of Ontario is determined to pass Bill 160 without meaningful consultation with parents, teachers and other stakeholders; and

"Whereas a properly funded quality education system is critical to the wellbeing of the children of this province and to the future of the province itself;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly hold a province-wide referendum on the question of whether Bill 160, the Education Quality Improvement Act, 1997, should be withdrawn or, if enacted, whether Bill 160 should be repealed."

I've signed my name to the petition.

CHIROPRACTIC HEALTH CARE

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's my privilege to present a petition on behalf of the member for Durham Centre, my colleague the Minister of Labour, the Honourable Jim Flaherty. The petition is to Premier Mike Harris, Health Minister Elizabeth Witmer and members of the Ontario Legislature, and it's by the chiropractic patients of Ontario who are urging the government to extend the service and funding of chiropractic services. I am pleased to sign my name to the petition.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas approximately 300 workers are killed on the job each year and 400,000 suffer work-related injuries and illnesses;

"Whereas the government of Ontario continues to allow a massive erosion of WCB prevention funding; and

"Whereas Ontario workers are fearful that the government of Ontario, through its recent initiatives, is threatening to dismantle workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Whereas the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre have consistently provided a

meaningful role for labour within the health and safety prevention system; and

"Whereas the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre have proven to be the most cost-effective prevention organizations funded by the WCB;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately cease the assault on the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Further we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure that the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre remain labour-driven organizations with full and equitable WCB funding and that the WCB provide adequate prevention funding to eliminate workplace illness and injury."

It's signed by a large number of people from right across Ontario.

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): I have a petition that is signed by a number of constituents from Aurora, Newmarket, Holland Landing and Bradford. It is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas nurses in Ontario often experience coercion to participate in practices which directly contravene their deeply held ethical standards; and

"Whereas pharmacists in Ontario are often pressured to dispense and/or sell chemicals and/or devices contrary to their moral or religious beliefs; and

"Whereas public health workers in Ontario are expected to assist in providing controversial services and promoting controversial materials against their consciences; and

"Whereas physicians in Ontario often experience pressure to give referrals for medications, treatments and/or procedures which they believe to be gravely immoral; and

"Whereas competent health care workers and students in various health care disciplines in Ontario have been denied training, employment, continued employment and advancement in their intended fields and suffered other forms of unjust discrimination because of the dictates of their consciences; and

"Whereas the health care workers experiencing such unjust discrimination have at present no practical and accessible legal means to protect themselves;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers, prohibiting coercion of and unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary to the dictates of their consciences and establishing penalties for such coercion and unjust discrimination."

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I have a petition here signed by people all the way from Scarborough to Kenora, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas all schools in Ontario should be safe learning and working environments; and

"Whereas all Ontarians should be assured that safe school programs are in place in all Ontario schools; and

"Whereas a private member's bill has been drafted entitled An Act to Promote Safety in Ontario Schools and Create Positive Learning Environments for Ontario Students, 1998; and

"Whereas this bill will:

"Require all boards in Ontario to design and implement school safety programs, school codes of conduct and anti-vandalism policies;

"Provide for effective early intervention strategies by requiring boards to design and implement anti-bullying policies and by providing boards with the ability to direct psychological assessments of students that they believe are at risk;

"Provide a provincial violence and weapons-free schools policy and allow boards the ability to exclude violent students from regular classroom settings;

"Give police the tools they need by creating a new provincial offence for trespassing on school property and backing it up with real consequences;

"Direct all boards in Ontario to design and implement alternative education programs for suspended and excluded students;

"Require parents to be liable for any damage done to school property by their children; and

"Protect teachers and staff from civil liability;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To pass into law the Safe Schools Act as quickly as possible."

1540

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the adjourned debate on the amendment to the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): The member for Dovercourt.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I know when I finished off the time that was on the clock last night there were still a few minutes left and I'm glad to have the chance to complete my remarks this afternoon.

I talked a little bit last night about the contradictory approach, the two-pronged approach that I saw Mike Harris and company take in the speech from the throne. On the

one hand, they were trying very hard to project a softer, gentler, "we're listening" type of attitude and approach, and of course we saw many, many examples of that in the speech where they tried to say, "Well, here's this individual who supports what we're doing here and there." Certainly those of us listening here and people listening across the province would have had to wonder how that meshes against the reality of what is going on out there.

We've seen many examples in terms of the cuts to our health care system, to our education system that quite frankly, in that area, we will continue to see more and more of in the coming months as school boards deal with the impact of the new funding formula. We have begun to see indications of classroom after classroom, school after school being closed down; entire programs such as adult programs being either shut down or completely restructured to the point where the supports that were there are no longer going to be there. That is certainly going to be the case here in Toronto. We will see over the next number of months many more indicators like that, many more decisions that school boards will have to take as a result of the new funding formula that will result in worse programs than we have today.

I can tell you, certainly from the perspective here in Toronto, that there were many in the Catholic school community who expected that as a result of the new funding formula they would get more money in the system. What we will see at the end of the three-year implementation of the new funding formula is a net gain, according to the ministry's own figures, of some \$3 million for the Catholic system here in Metropolitan Toronto, while on the other hand there is a loss of about \$125 million to the public system. That's just by looking at the government figures. The school boards themselves are still trying to crunch the numbers and get a better sense. I think by the end of the day we will see both systems, certainly here in the Toronto community, be the worse off rather than better off as a result of the new funding system.

I could go on if time allowed, area by area, and talk about the complete contradiction with the soft image the Tories tried to project in the speech from the throne and the harsh reality that's out there. The other part I mentioned last night was that at the same time as Mike Harris is trying to project a softer image, in the throne speech itself we also see his reminder to people out there that he hasn't really lost that tough guy image. Hence the comments that are in the speech about ensuring that they're going to continue to be tough on welfare recipients, that they're going to continue to make incredible demands on people who are the most vulnerable.

Today we saw the latest in what I know will continue to be a long series of changes. We had from the Ontario Dental Association a really detailed and very useful explanation of what the new welfare legislation will mean for people with disabilities and for children who are now covered under the Family Benefits Act. Now they are able to receive coverage for a number of dental services that they need. They will lose much of this coverage, coverage they are now able to get by going to a dentist of their

choosing. They will no longer be able to do that under the new system; they will have to go to a clinic set up by the local municipality, which will be responsible for running the new welfare system. In many cases, those clinics don't exist or aren't equipped to deal with these things. The net result — get this — coming from a government that prides itself on being able to manage things, according to Dr Sigal of the Ontario Dental Association, is that extraction services which now cost \$339 will under the new plan cost taxpayers \$855. It's going to cost taxpayers more to get less. That doesn't sound to me like good government, good services. It doesn't sound to me like good management.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I'd be quite prepared to give the honourable member across the way the correct information.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Mr Silipo: I only have a couple of minutes. I look forward to hearing the minister's statement in the rebuttal.

In the last couple of minutes, I just want to say that one of the points I have also been very interested in, in this whole discussion, is that as a member of the opposition I've continued to make the point that it's now more than ever important for us to put forward some alternatives. When our leader, Howard Hampton, spoke yesterday here on the throne speech debate, he set out very clearly the alternative view of the world that we have but also set out very realistically the way in which we would propose to pay for some of the reinvestment in education, in our health care system, in our social services.

Unlike our colleagues in the Liberal Party, who want to pretend that you can reinvest in education without affecting the tax system, that somehow you're going to find this money magically from God knows where — and I continued to ask my Liberal colleagues last night, and I want to tell them I'm going to ask them this question: How do they propose to pay for these new things? We have said very clearly we would take a look at the 30% income tax cut, which is at the base of everything Mike Harris is doing, and we would look at restructuring that and taking back the benefits that are going to the top 6% of taxpayers, those people who are making over \$80,000 and who constitute only 6% of taxpayers yet are gaining to the tune of \$1.5 billion as a benefit from the tax cut. They are the ones who are seeing some benefit in terms of money going in their pockets, and they are also the ones we believe ought to be prepared to reinvest in the services that all of us as Ontarians believe are important.

We're being very up front about that. People can agree or disagree with us on that, but we're being very straightforward because we take our role in opposition very seriously, and we believe that part of our role is not simply to say to Mike Harris, "What you're doing is wrong," but our role is also to say what we believe should be done instead.

I hope in this debate, whether it's in the throne speech, in the budget debate that we'll pick up next week or in the debates that will go on on whatever piece of legislation the government brings forward, we will continue to also talk

about the alternatives. We will do that from our end in the New Democratic Party. I look forward to hearing more clearly, more sharply and in greater detail what our Liberal colleagues would do, because that's the only way in which at the end of the day the voters of the province will be able to make a fair and clear choice as to whether they want the Mike Harris slash-and-burn approach, whether they want the airy-fairy approach the Liberals are promising — "We'll give you everything, but we don't know how we're going to pay for it; we're not going to tell you" — or whether they want something that is straightforward and practical, such as we are trying to propose in the New Democratic Party, that says, "These services in health care and social services and education are vital, and here's how we can fund them."

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Hon Mrs Ecker: To the honourable member, who I know is interested in this issue, one of the things we announced last year when we were changing the welfare system was that we were going to change the current patchwork of services for children who found themselves on welfare, where some could get dental benefits and some didn't, and make that mandatory. That is what we have done. It's a mandatory service for children across the province.

We are not downloading public health. People will continue to be able to go to their dentist. We have not changed that; that's not changing tomorrow, contrary to the claims that have been made today. We're going to be caring for more children, there's going to be more money, and also we're not downloading to municipalities, because many municipalities, as I know the honourable member appreciates, are already giving dental services to children. We want to make sure those municipalities will continue to be providing those dental services.

1550

Some of the other claims today — that somehow or other we were going to be asking dentists to be preauthorizing emergency care? With all due respect, that is quite ludicrous, quite frankly, and is certainly not what we're doing. If there is emergency treatment that child needs, clearly what everyone would want is for that professional to give the care that child needs at that time.

Contrary to the claims, we want to have better dental services for children. We've also invited the ODA to be part of the working group that is working on the new program over the course of the next couple of months. We know they have professional expertise to offer us. I'm certainly prepared to accept that. I have been most concerned about the tack they have taken today.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): Very briefly, in partial reply to the member for Dovercourt, I've always been one who never really spends a lot of time worrying about something I don't have any control over. I would suggest to the member for Dovercourt that he doesn't have any control over how the Liberal Party will do what it wants to do when the time comes for us to tell you how we would do it.

I can tell you one thing: We won't do it through a social contract that takes away the right of public workers in the province of Ontario.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I want to congratulate my friend from Dovercourt on his presentation. I find it amusing that my friend from — Essex-Kent, is it?

Mr Crozier: I'm not going to help you.

Mr Wildman: Essex South. As all Liberals are wont to do, he is quite willing to tell us what he won't do but he doesn't want to tell us what his party will do if they have the opportunity. I guess it's because they haven't decided yet and they don't want to confuse anybody with plans that might or might not actually happen.

I want to talk a bit about what my friend from Dovercourt talked about in the throne speech presentation, where this Conservative government has attempted to make itself appear to be listening, to be more compassionate and caring. There was a lot of that in the throne speech. It's interesting that we look at that and listen to that and put it in the context of what else the representatives of the government have been saying.

We know that not long before the throne speech was presented in this House, the Premier spoke out about the various cuts taking place in welfare assistance across Ontario and tried to explain why the government is doing some of these things.

What hit me in trying to determine whether or not this government really is compassionate and caring and really is concerned about good starts for children was the decision by this government to cut \$37 a month from pregnant mothers who find themselves on social assistance. This money would be used to assist them to get fresh vegetables and fresh fruit to supplement their diet to ensure that the foetus is healthy. The Premier explained that the reason the government was doing this was that he feared pregnant mothers would buy beer instead of vegetables and fruit. That is the true face of this government.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's a pleasure to respond to the member for Dovercourt's comments. The Minister of Community and Social Services was quite correct in saying that the members should become a little more familiar with the points she was trying to make.

I believe in all sincerity that your comments addressed to the Liberal Party were quite correct. They're prepared to say they're going to do everything but not prepared to tell you anything about the actual cost and how they are prepared to deliver those programs.

In response to your remarks, I believe your party does have a social conscience but also has perhaps proven itself not to be fully accountable for how you're going to do that.

Every responsible government is always looking for a balance. If you look even more recently at the announcements made by our Minister of Health of \$1.2 billion — I found it offensive that the member for York South, the health critic for the Liberals, had nothing but criticism. In fact, we're expanding the amount of treatment and the style of treatment the elderly receive in this province.

I know this party is doing its very best to manage its resources without increasing taxes, to manage its resources while trying to balance the budget, a commitment that all people of Ontario want us to follow through on.

So we have before us the choice of one party that wants to spend its way out of every problem, but ultimately that has to be passed on to the taxpayers. On the other side we have the age-old Liberal problem of tax and spend. The taxpayer listening today to the response to the throne speech should clearly face the fact that this government is doing exactly what we promised. We are doing it with compassion and we're always looking for a balance of service to people at the right place —

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. The member's time is up. The member for Dovercourt has two minutes to respond.

Mr Silipo: I really appreciate the comments in response to my statements. I appreciated the fact that the Minister of Community and Social Services chose to respond. I want to say to her a couple of things very quickly. The information I've put forward is not of my own making; it is information that comes from the experts who are delivering these services now. That information includes such things as that single moms will no longer be covered by this amalgamation of the two systems. The minister said that people will be able to continue to go to their own dentist. My understanding is that they will not.

I would be very happy to be proven wrong on these points, because to be proven wrong would mean that at least the quality of service that has been there would continue. I urge the minister to talk with people in the Ontario Dental Association, who are the experts, and others in the field to make sure we're all working from the same base of information on this. She should take their advice and go slower on this and not implement the new changes until everyone is clear about what the impact will be, and not find ourselves here, as we have on many other issues, in a situation where the government implements something and then has to undo it because they've discovered that it isn't working quite the way they thought it would.

I want to say briefly to my colleague from Essex South that I've no interest in trying to control the Liberal Party or what it does. I do have not only an interest but I think I have a responsibility to continue to ask them, on behalf of my caucus and on behalf of Ontarians, that they come clean with their positions. I don't expect them to have a fully fleshed out election platform today. We don't have that yet, quite frankly, and neither does the Tory party. But as we are talking about various important issues, it's incumbent on us that we also answer the important question about how things are going to be funded. That's all I'm getting at. You can't continue to say, "We're going to reinvest hundreds of millions of dollars" in health care or education and not be prepared to say where the money is going to come from.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

1600

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): I am very happy and with great pride I'm very delighted to join in the second throne speech of this government.

Before I proceed, I would like to offer my personal condolences to the distinguished member for St Andrew-St Patrick on the passing of her husband, who was an outstanding Canadian, a dynamic entrepreneur, a fabulous broadcaster, a tremendous job creator, a tireless volunteer and, above all, a distinguished Canadian. We are going to miss the kind of leadership in Ontario and Canada that John Bassett brought to this nation.

Etobicoke-Rexdale is a diverse community focused on meeting the challenges of the next century. Like most Ontario citizens, the people of Etobicoke-Rexdale are dedicated and hardworking, many of whom have come from diverse nations, practically every nation of the world, to this part of the new city of Toronto. They have brought their families here to raise a better family, realize their dreams and make Ontario the place they want to live in, work in and raise a family.

During my two terms as an Etobicoke city councillor, I had the opportunity to bear witness at first hand to the irresponsible policies of the two previous provincial governments which wreaked havoc on the riding of Etobicoke-Rexdale. In what specific ways? Two that I can recall. It was near the end of the prosperity of the 1980s when we had a budget brought down by the Liberal government of that day, with the dreaded Nixonian commercial concentration tax. This particular tax that we've been reminded of by members opposite so often was a direct intrusion into the operations of local government. Primarily, it had a very devastating impact on the hotel industry, not only in the Etobicoke-Rexdale area but right across Metropolitan Toronto and throughout Ontario. It was a real job killer.

Secondly, almost within that same budget of 1989 we had the introduction of the employer health tax. This beautiful little tax helped to kill off even more jobs just as Ontario was moving into a very severe depression. Some people called it a recession, depending on what end of the microscope you looked through and what level of experience you had had as a worker and family person in the Ontario community.

Quite a contrast in the last seven years, quite a contrast since June 8, 1995, when the Harris government got elected. We came into power facing a huge deficit, a large debt, significant unemployment and large growth in the expansion of the state.

What is the current state of affairs today? If you talk to many people from all walks of life, you will find they are more confident, they are more energetic, they are more enthusiastic. We have people who have been out of the labour force for more than five to seven years who have rejoined. They are getting work. Why? Because they've done some training. They have found a place in the new Ontario economy.

If you look at the job numbers today, we have approximately 337,000 new private sector jobs being created.

Consumer confidence is up. The Ontario economy has seen consumer confidence grow by about 22.9%. Housing starts are up significantly. Meanwhile, we have managed to reduce Ontario's deficit by \$6.1 billion. Ontario's income tax has been reduced by 22.9%, a significant reversal to the years of the dreaded stupid tax increases that we had experienced across this province, making Ontario a highly uncompetitive place in which not only to try to invest but to raise a family.

While the economic statistics paint a bright picture, the strength of the economy can be seen in other ways throughout communities across this province. In particular, in my riding of Etobicoke-Rexdale there are four significant ventures that have taken hold. In the pharmaceutical industry, Apotex/Torpharm pharmaceuticals has invested nearly \$175 million in a new expansion. Torpharm is the only Canadian pharmaceutical facility dedicated solely to US exports. It is an important facility for our riding, representing high-paying job creation in a knowledge-based industry.

The second significant facility in construction is Shoppers World Albion Mall, constructing its first expansion in over 25 years. In making their announcement, the shop owners said their future is bright.

A third example of how the economy is turning around in my area is that the constituents recently saw an announcement by the Toronto Congress Centre that it will be doubling its exhibition space by nearly one-half million square feet. This will make for more tourism dollars in west Toronto, more jobs in the Etobicoke community, construction jobs and event-planning jobs in the whole exhibitions industry.

The next significant facility that has announced and is actually in construction is a \$20-million expansion in major renovations at Woodbine Racetrack in west Toronto. This investment will also bring high, well-paying jobs and tourist dollars to the Etobicoke economy.

These are but four examples of the many facilities and people that are benefiting from a powerful economic environment that this government has helped to shape.

Since the first throne speech, this government has made significant changes to building a better health care system in Ontario: a system that is consistent with the needs of our changing, growing and aging population; a system that will provide increased and improved access to high-quality services for all people at every stage of their lives.

The commitment of the Ontario government is not only reinforced in health care initiatives but also in the major, key area of the fulfilment of a vision of a better health care system for this province, and that is the significant announcement in the past few days by Premier Harris and Health Minister Elizabeth Witmer of the \$1.2-billion expansion not only in facilities but in programming for long-term care.

Personally, I have been involved in many situations where people have been experiencing problems in getting access to long-term care in this province, in getting enhanced home support care. We are going to be addressing these concerns through this initiative and it will bring

more completed, effective, realistic types of health care concerns and vision to Ontario and its citizens.

We're also focusing on the special health care needs that children require. So far, the government has introduced numerous programs to assist with the growth and development of our children, contrary to the assertions of members opposite.

Only a few days ago, we announced a massive reinvestment in speech and language pathology programs for our youngest children. Because of the previous governments' not taking sufficient action in this whole area of prevention and early intervention, we had a situation where only 1,800 Toronto children received the help they required with speech and language difficulties — only 1,800 children. Now, in the new scenario, over the next three years you will see, starting in September 1998, \$3.1 million specifically committed by the health ministry to deal with this problem. Over the next three years you will also see significant reinvestment, significant new expenditures to ensure that over 14,000 preschool children in Metropolitan Toronto, in the new city of Toronto, will get the help they need and become better prepared to enter our education system.

From increased spending in speech and language pathology programs to providing a healthy breakfast program to children who come to school hungry in many instances, this government will continue to protect and provide assistance to Ontario's high-risk kids. I am sincerely working hard to ensure that our children will have a bright and healthy future in that area.

As you know, over the last two years this government has worked hard to make reform of our education system fundamental to the new economy that all our young people, in fact all the citizens of this province who are employable and are seeking work out there in terms of the new millennium, will have to get geared up for, whether it be job training, going back to school, adult education, ESL and all the other amenities and needs of the education system we have had to deal with.

1610

Over the past few years we have seen previous governments spend lots of money studying the system, making recommendations but shelving them without really making any significant changes in the system. Witness Education Minister Johnson coming to Highfield school just recently to announce changes in kindergarten. What I found amazing about the announcement was that there had not been any real changes in the curriculum for kindergarten children since 1944. That's over 50 years. That is one small but very significant example of the need to restructure the whole education system.

When we were dealing with the teachers during the Bill 160 debate in this province, the question was posed by many people, including myself, that if the education system is performing as well as everybody believes it is or it ought to, why is it that there is such a continuing gap, a widening chasm, between curriculum development and the growing job market? Why is it that we have in this province today and have had over the last decade or more a

youth unemployment rate of nearly 15%? In fact, you can probably apply that statistic across this great nation. If the education system has been performing as well as the educators claimed, why weren't the young people getting the jobs they were expecting to get when they left school?

It's a complex answer, but you can be sure that one of the things that was lacking in trying to explain that chasm — those who were saying that educational standards were pretty good, and the reality in the external world where we had an increasing youth unemployment rate — was that the school boards and the governments of the day certainly weren't dealing with the technological dimension of the challenge. If they were, then why weren't previous Liberal and NDP governments investing in science and technology in the classroom? Why did they prevent our children from learning about the latest technologies?

Those aren't just rhetorical questions. All you have to do is go into any school in this province, be it a Catholic board or a public school board, and to this day you will see that a large number of these boards have not got on with the need for getting computers into the classroom. You can go into any number of schools. Don't be misled by my advocacy of that particular example, that a computer in and of itself is the panacea to the problems we face. It is simply one of the tools we should have had in place over the last decade. Even at this point in time today, even with the initiatives of this government, we still face an enormous challenge in that area.

In other words, there is a cumulative history here dealing with this whole situation of making sure that our young people were not only adequately educated as thinking citizens but that they were also equipped technologically to go out and face the new economy that so many other nations have got on with, the job of providing those essential tools in the areas of computer software and hardware in our educational institutions. There is a glaring lack of providing those tools by the previous two governments, and this one still has a lot of work to do in this particular area compared to other nations throughout the world.

By not addressing this problem over the last 10 to 15 years, we have in effect neglected the opportunities that ought to be available to children of any background, to young adults coming out of the school system, out of our community college system, for the jobs in the new economy. Practically everything you touch today, whether you go to fill up your car with gasoline at the station, turn on a microwave, fly in an airplane or go to get some coin out of a bank, you have a chip dictating how you carry on. That is why we need to get on with making sure we provide effective and sufficient educational technologies for our young people as they face the new millennium.

Finally, I want to make some comments about the references I keep hearing from across the aisle to Bill 160. Some members, it would appear, seem to think that Bill 160 has not been passed. In fact, we have moved on from that point in time. We're still hearing petitions about Bill 160. When we look at what the Leader of the Opposition would do, I'm appalled to think of what he might do

should he ever get over here. I want to quote the leader on his varying positions on Bill 160.

He started out by stating in a scrum last November 27, "We've got to start by scrapping Bill 160." Okay, that sounds pretty clear. But no, we haven't ended. On the same day, he said, "There are going to be some parts of my legislation that won't be dissimilar from Bill 160." I wonder what he meant by that, "dissimilar"?

Does that mean that if he scrapped Bill 160, we'd return to a situation where school boards have unaccountable authority for taxing the property owner in the province, that we'd return to a system of no testing — goodness gracious, no testing — that we'd have trips by school trustees and lots of other folks to all parts of the world and then they'll provide us with reports about things that will never get implemented? It would mean, I guess, a return to the type of school boards we had before. I hope this is not the future of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Questions or comments?

Mr David Caplan (Oriole): I really want to thank the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, Mr Hastings, for his comments. Unfortunately, he didn't talk much about what was in the throne speech or what was not in the throne speech. The member finished his comments talking about education. I have to tell you, I'm shocked that there was one line in that entire speech — a whole hour we sat here — that talked about post-secondary education.

Young people in this province have said that they cannot afford the tuitions that have been foisted upon them by this government. They have said they're being saddled by a debt burden which is \$25,000 on average, they've estimated, and that this is beyond their capabilities. So 25% of the student loans are going towards bankruptcies because of the direct actions of this government.

You would think that in the throne speech you would want to talk about some measures to assist young people in this province, some measures that were going to help young people. They've been crying out for their needs. They were in the streets here in Toronto and across this province; they occupied buildings. They said, "We need help," but nothing, not a word, not a piece of ink which was of any help to students or post-secondary institutions in this province.

It shameful that this government has completely abandoned young people of this province, that they've made things harder for young people, that they've placed a greater burden on their families. It's about time that somebody stood up and said, "I'm willing to help." By the way, there is somebody. It is Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party.

1620

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): In reply to some of the comments made by the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, let me focus on his end comments with respect to Bill 160. I think I heard the member say that he was surprised that some members of this House are still dealing with Bill 160 as if it had not passed, and he made a reference to the petitions that are being raised, a petition that

was specifically raised by my colleague from Algoma today.

If the member thinks that because Bill 160 has been passed the public's concern about education, particularly this government's direction with respect to education, is somehow gone, he ought to think again, because the fact of the matter is that two priorities top every poll with respect to what people are concerned about: They are concerned about what's happening to quality health care in this province and what this government is doing to public education.

If anything, the debate about Bill 160 certainly mobilized parents, teachers and people who have an education in the system even if their children aren't in it right now with respect to what the government is doing. People see clearly that the changes the government made with respect to Bill 160 are all geared to invent a crisis, to have a crisis in the education system, so that then you will have parents who will call for the ability to have charter schools or private schools, so that money that should go into a good, publicly funded education system will be diverted into a private system.

I am very concerned about the ramifications of Bill 160. People are still feeling it in my community now. The boards that are dealing with the impacts of that bill are now announcing to the public the number of schools that will be closed. So, for all the Premier's rhetoric about no cuts to classrooms, in my community the boards have already announced the closure of three community schools and the classrooms that went with them. Now the boards want to put kids on a bus and bring them to a big school in the city, quite against the wishes of the parents involved. The impacts of this bill continue. We're going to continue to raise the issue, we're going to continue to raise petitions, because people's concern about what you're doing to education has not gone away.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I was most interested in the comments of the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale. I was particularly interested in the long-term-care portion of his address, because we in Algoma-Manitoulin have particular concerns about long-term care, nursing home beds in particular, and I speak to the House about Elliot Lake and its need for nursing home beds. This is a community that has done a tremendous job of revitalizing itself, reinventing itself and is now known as one of the premier retirement communities in Ontario because it has a wealth of services. In Elliot Lake, we have lost half our hospital beds. Half our hospital beds are gone. Many of the people in those hospital beds were in what you might call a nursing home category, but they were in the hospital.

Sister Sarah Quackenbush, the executive director of the hospital, says that 51 seniors have had to leave the community to get nursing home care because it's just not available in Elliot Lake today. It would be easily demonstrated that we have lost 50 to 60 long-term-care beds in the community. But we're asking the government, out of the \$150 million that is being allocated to long-term care, which I suggest is grossly inadequate given the situation,

nevertheless to do what 6,000 people in Elliot Lake requested by way of petition, and probably the entire population of 14,000 agree with, and that is to put those long-term-care beds, those nursing home beds, in the community in the first announcement that we may see. I think it is only reasonable. This community needs it, wants it, and your government has contributed significantly to the problem.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions or comments? If not, the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale.

Mr Hastings: In response to the comments of the member for Oriole, I would like him to revisit the whole issue of student financing under OSAP and look at what this government has done in terms of the last two budgets. Specifically, point 1, the student learning opportunities fund was established in 1996 on a matching dollar basis for both the community colleges and the universities. In the 1997 budget, the universities were not allowed to continue to participate in the program, but it was continued for the community colleges. Look at the impact of that particular fund in terms of opportunities. Also, look at last year's budget in terms of the commitment of this government in terms of long-term financing for student aid in this province for learning opportunities. It will be marvellous when he sees what has been accomplished. He should re-educate himself on that.

With respect to long-term care, the federal Minister of Health has talked about the necessity for a national program of home care. He has been talking about it for about six months to a year. We haven't talked about it; we've actually acted on it. This is what your critic for health over there has been advocating for the last six to nine months: "Where's the vision? Where's the money from the restructuring going into long-term care?" Voilà. This is the product. Here are the specific products, the specific results of this whole initiative.

With respect to Bill 160, there is no doubt we're not going back, unless you love the status quo. If the status quo is so great, why do we have such a large youth unemployment rate in this country?

The Acting Speaker: The time has expired. Further debate?

Mr Crozier: It is nice to hear him admit that we have a large unemployment problem in Ontario. I guess this government has been in charge of that for the last three years.

I'm pleased today to rise to give some comments on the speech from the throne. Occasionally, one would suggest that it might be interesting to break from tradition and rather than have a speech from the throne, maybe it should be a speech to the throne by the citizens of Ontario. The reason I say that is because I think this speech from the throne did not exactly a disservice but didn't quite pay service to one of the major industries of Ontario, that being agriculture.

Today I don't want to be provocative. Frankly, some people say the speech from the throne is a lot of puffery and that there's nothing in it and no one should pay any attention to it anyway, that it's really when we get on to

budgets and legislation and get really into the meat of what a Legislature does that we should be concerned with that.

I want to make reference particularly to agriculture today. In the speech from the throne, what was said was positive. I want to acknowledge that. What was said was this — and it was said in 16 words: "Agriculture and food industries leading the nation in farm cash receipts and value-added food production." Being from a rural community, from Essex county, I acknowledge that and I appreciate that. It's because of the hardworking agricultural residents of our great province that this is a true statement.

My problem is that in a speech from the throne that runs pages long, I would have thought that one of the greatest industries in Ontario would certainly be given more than 16 words. Therefore, what I'd like to do today is, combined with my words, I'd like to put in the record the words of others. That's why I suggest that when we speak about the speech from the throne we should also take into consideration what many of the residents of Ontario would like to say.

I read from a news release from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, "Throne Speech Recognizes Ontario Agriculture as Leading the Nation." This press release does indeed quote from the throne speech where "leading the nation in farm cash receipts and value-added food production" is mentioned. It also says the OFA welcomes the rural youth job strategy program. I'm not sure exactly what has been spent in that job strategy program to date, but certainly in Essex county we held a forum on youth job strategy and passed on our recommendations to the Minister of Agriculture.

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What this news release does say is just as important in another part of it. It says: "From the beginning, the Farmers of Ontario," through a reinvestment program, "has stressed the urgency for the government of Ontario to reinvest in these programs, which are: research, the environment, market development and risk management. Ontario agriculture can only continue to be a competitive force in a global and domestic economy if the government begins to enhance the agricultural budget on a yearly basis, beginning now."

On the one hand they are saying, "Thank you very much for recognizing how we're leading the nation," but on the other hand suggesting areas in which the province of Ontario, through its government and through its citizens, should begin to enhance the agricultural budget on a yearly basis.

The OFA news release goes on to say, "We are now calling on the government to reinvest in the agriculture industry as well." The farm industry has taken steps to suggest how that might be done. They don't just idly say, "Come on government, please, it's time to reinvest in one of the greatest industries in this province." They also make some suggestions on how that might be done. By referring to these suggestions and getting them on the record, I want to indicate that I wholeheartedly support their effort in doing so.

The Farmers of Ontario have recently met with many of the MPPs from this House, with the Minister of Agriculture and several other ministers as well, both rural and urban, and that meeting was to urge them to allocate new money to the agriculture budget. In the few minutes that I have, I am going to point out a few areas where the agriculture budget, quite frankly, has suffered drastically. We know that once having taken this money out of agriculture, it's exceedingly difficult to have it put back in where it would do the most good.

I quote from the media release of the Farmers of Ontario: "Employment in the automotive and auto parts industry would have to quadruple in size to be as important to Ontario's total economy as agriculture and related services are to rural Ontario's economy."

I think anyone who has read that or listened to it would be quite surprised to find out the magnitude by which the auto industry — we think the auto industry is the driving force behind the economy in the province of Ontario. It's the driving force behind the economy of the United States. But it would have to quadruple in size before it would have the same effect as the agriculture community in the province of Ontario. Therefore, I think that these agricultural representatives, the 37 farm organizations across the province, deserve our support, they deserve our consideration, and they certainly are prepared to back up their suggestions with some good, sound ideas.

Every \$1 million created by agriculture and related services in the province of Ontario generates approximately 31 jobs.

In the area of research it said:

"Agricultural research provides a foundation for agricultural productivity in Ontario. It allows us to make the best use of our soil, water and land resources in the production of high-quality food and compete on a global level. Right now, the provincial government invests half as much in its agriculture and food sector as other provinces. This needs to change. There is still much to be done." This is a quote from Ken Porteous, the Tender Fruit Producers' Marketing Board.

We can see that they have made this suggestion that research is an area that can become an engine in our economy. When we talk about the benefits of research, I can recall living in an agricultural community when a great deal of time, energy, effort and labour went into the production of tomato products for processing and how, through research, they've now developed a tomato that can be machine-harvested and therefore harvested more economically. The production per acre has increased dramatically, and it's only through research that we can do this. So there is a benefit to that.

I quote as well about the environment from the piece of material that was put out called Rebuild, Restore, Reinvest...Secure the Future of Agriculture:

"OMAFRA has played a key role in all of our environmental initiatives. We couldn't have progressed as quickly without the ministry's expertise, support and funding. Despite our gains, we are facing new environmental challenges all the time and we need to extend our

environmental efforts much further.' Peter Oosterhoff, Dairy Farmers of Ontario."

What they're saying here is that we haven't done enough. We've had help along the way — part of the concern in my area and part of the concern that resulted from a rural tour of Ontario that Pat Hoy and John Cleary conducted is that there will be a further reduction in the OMAFRA offices and the OMAFRA assistance that they receive around the province. I hope that's not the case.

Market development: If you improve production, if you improve productivity, if you improve your product, if you have the best product that anyone can grow, not only in the Dominion of Canada but I think we grow the best products in North America, you also have to have market development in order to sell those products. I again quote from the document:

"At a time when the global economy is of such great importance, we don't understand why the government of Ontario would lag so far behind other provinces in its support for agricultural marketing and trade."

Ed Segsworth, the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, has made those comments and I think made them in a constructive and positive way. He's saying: "Look, if we have the best products in the world, if we have the best products with which to feed our citizens, then what we have to do in a global market is to market them. We have to get those products out and sell them."

Consumer confidence. I quote again:

"As well as protecting Ontario consumers, OMAFRA's food grading and inspection services also have a role to play in helping producers access foreign markets which have strict health and safety regulations." Bob Down of the Ontario Corn Producers' Association says this.

I attended the opening of an office in Essex South most recently. One of their main responsibilities is the quality of food that we produce in our agricultural industry. I must say I can support this comment that OMAFRA's food grading and inspection services have, are and will play a significant role in marketing and distributing our agricultural products and doing it in a way that those who buy our products can feel that they're safe.

Under the area of risk management:

"Agriculture, unlike any other business, is unique because we have to deal with natural elements beyond our control. Risk management programs are an integral part of the agricultural industry. We need to reinvest in these..." Wayne Newman, Ontario Agricultural Commodity Council."

Those are the main suggestions, the main areas of concern that are contained in the document from the 37 farm organizations in Ontario which they named Rebuild, Restore, Reinvest...Secure the Future of Agriculture in Ontario.

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As I said at the outset, I support their point of view. I know they have passed these recommendations on to the Minister of Agriculture and I support him in any effort he can make to encourage his government, the government of Ontario, to follow those recommendations.

I want to point out a couple of recent incidents that have been expressed to us on our farm tour that may clarify a couple of issues. As I said, Minister, I wanted my comments today not to be provocative but to be supportive and to support the agricultural industry, but recently it has bothered some, who have passed their comments on to me, that the Ministry of Agriculture has tried to make a couple of claims, and perhaps the minister will be able to help me in this area if he chooses to reply to this, that spending on the community reinvestment fund, ice storm spending, and Ministry of Finance tax rebates on farm buildings and other spending from other ministries should be counted as agricultural spending. If that's the case, I really don't think it would be fair to suggest that.

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): It's not agriculture spending. You know that.

Mr Crozier: Yes. I'm pleased to know that, because we know that the community reinvestment fund was totally municipal. The ice storm spending — and I certainly support that in support of those who were disadvantaged by this winter's ice storm. I only hope we get the same support for, to a much lesser degree, flooding that has been taking place in Essex county. But that wasn't a budgeted program; it's a program that governments have to react to on the spot and one to which we encourage citizens of Ontario to contribute on their own as well.

All we're saying, Minister, is that we support you in any effort you can make, and support the 37 farm organizations in Ontario that have made these recommendations in any way you can. Those of us in rural Ontario — I particularly speak for those in Essex South — would have appreciated it more if agriculture was given a bit more recognition in the throne speech. I know it's a limited document; perhaps the 16 words it was given were limited to that because there just wasn't an awful lot more time allotted to that ministry.

In conclusion, I want to take the couple of minutes I have left to make one or two comments on the critic role that I have within the Liberal Party, that being the one of seniors issues. I have brought this up with the Minister of Health on a couple of occasions and I hope to bring it back to the Minister of Health in the future, but we have an interesting situation where couples are separated because one or the other of the spouses has to be admitted to a nursing home. These separations are not voluntary; they're involuntary separations. I brought it to the minister's attention that due to these involuntary separations, much of the couple's income that may have exceeded \$24,000 is spent to keep one of the spouses in a nursing home. The result is that the copayment or user fee of the spouse in the nursing home's drug prescription is \$2, but the spouse who's left at home, who may in fact have an income of less than \$16,000, has to pay the higher \$6.11 user fee with the \$100 deductible.

The federal government recognizes involuntary separation. In this small bit of my comment today that I will pass on to the Minister of Health, I only hope the Minister of

Health would consider involuntary separation for seniors as being something that could be looked at so that the remaining spouse, who has a very limited income, may also be eligible for the \$2 user fee.

I thank you for your attention today. I particularly thank the rest of the members of the House for their rapt attention to this. I appreciate the opportunity to have given these viewpoints.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Questions or comments?

Mr Wildman: I appreciated the comments of my friend from Essex South with regard to the spectacular lack of commitment by this government to agriculture in the province. I must say, to be fair, that the minister has been very quick to respond to the concerns of my constituents in Algoma district in establishing an ag rep's office in the farm community rather than in the urban centre. It has been very much welcome. Members of his staff and I were happy to open that office there. I would tell the minister that I was happy to open the office, but my one concern is that we don't have an ag rep. We have the office.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: The office is not empty.

Mr Wildman: No, it's not empty. There's a clerk there. The farmers are very happy to have it there. It's just that I would urge the minister to move to appoint the ag rep.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: We almost had one, you know.

Mr Wildman: Good. The farmers are also very concerned about the lack of funding for the ministry that was referred to by my friend from Essex South. I wonder if the government, after having made this change with the farm tax rebate to make it into a tax relief measure for the farmers rather than a rebate, also recognizes the serious effects this will have for rural municipalities and the possibility that farmers may find that the tax rate on their residences goes up exponentially as the tax rate drops on the farm land and on the farm buildings.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: I too want to comment on my colleague from Essex South's presentation on the throne speech. I want to remind him that I also met with the Farmers of Ontario yesterday, as a matter of fact, and it was a very cordial meeting. I reminded them that yes, this is one of the ministries that did get more funding since the present government has been in place. We took over in 1995 and then we had a slight increase in 1996, another slight increase in 1997-98. We're kind of proud of that.

I want to remind them that \$41 million in research and development annually gets spent oriented towards the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. That's more than the province of Quebec and the province of Alberta put together.

The interesting thing is that we still have colleges of agriculture, food and technology. I want to remind my colleagues that the enrolment is up in Alfred, in Kemptonville, in Ridgeway and at the University of Guelph, up by between 10% and 20%. When young people choose the agrifood sector to obtain their education in, that says to me that the industry is in good health. We've had a turn-

around from three years ago, where the enrolment in these colleges is rising.

And \$5.6 billion is exported annually in agrifood production from the province of Ontario — very important to our economy — and that's rising. It's 167% more than it was 10 years ago. We're pretty proud of that as a government and we're encouraging that very strongly. We have \$30 million in a rural job strategy fund.

The ice storm: Yes, we had cheques for farmers on January 29. No one else can really say that they had money that quickly.

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Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): I'm delighted to respond to the speech of my colleague from Essex South. I can see that he's pretty much aware of what the needs are in the agricultural sector, because he comes from Leamington, where the tomato growers are. But just to go back on the market development for the agricultural sector, on Monday 11 people came from Cameroon, Africa, to visit my riding. We went down to visit Marc Bercier's farm, a soya producer. He was telling me that he could expand because the demand is there locally, but he hasn't got the tools or the money to do the marketing outside of this province. I really feel that in the speech we should have had something that covers the transforming or the marketing for the agricultural products of Ontario. We have very little to market our product.

Also, I was up to see the Kaisin farm, and I'm sure the minister has received some calls from the Kaisin farm. They lost over 150 sheep during the ice storm. They are still waiting for help. Four months have passed since the ice storm, and they are still waiting for help. Those people lost over \$100,000 during the period of Easter because they usually sell a lot of lambs during the Easter period. But again, in the throne speech we haven't seen anything. We mentioned the ice storm a little bit, but let me tell you, the ice storm shows that eastern Ontario is playing a major role in the economy of Ontario.

Ms Martel: I want to congratulate the member for Essex South on his remarks here today. I was pleased to listen to the go-round from other members as they commented on your remarks. I'm sure you're going to want to remark to the Minister of Agriculture, who is here today, that he's got the most creative accounting I've ever seen.

If you take a look at the estimates and the actual amounts that were spent in agriculture under this Conservative government, it is quite plain to see that the spending on agriculture has decreased under this Conservative government, not increased. This despite the promise that was made by the minister when he was in the third party and by his leader, who is now Premier, that in fact there would be no cuts to the agricultural budget. I wonder what kind of creative accounting he is using.

Maybe the member for Essex South would like to ask the question of where the money is being spent. I'd like to just refer to an article that was done by Allan Fotheringham. I think it will give you some idea of where the Tories are spending the money that I think and I think the member thinks should have been spent in agriculture. He says,

"This comes with the news that one Tom Long, chief strategist in Premier Mike Harris's 1995 election victory, has a ready explanation for his inclusion in Pork Ontario." Now that's not pork as in pork pig, but it is pork as in porkbarrel.

What he says is: "By wondrous happenstance, Long's firm was awarded a US\$250,000 bundle to search for the new head honcho for Ontario Hydro, which we now know is closely related to Pork Ontario. Long, the brains behind the Premier, since the Premier has none" — this is in Allan's words — "also, as it turns out, charged Ontario Hydro a further \$6,825, at an hourly rate of \$650. It was, he explains, because he spent 10.5 hours" — not 10, not 11, but 10.5 — "helping work on speeches for one Bill Farlinger."

So, if the member wants to know where the money is —

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The member for Essex South has two minutes to respond.

Mr Crozier: As I said at the outset to the minister, I really didn't want to be provocative today. I tried to take a positive approach, but when it comes to spending, the information I have — and it's a long list; I'm not so sure I can get through it in two minutes: cancellation of the Niagara tender fruit lands program, \$2.5 million; administration cuts, \$1.2 million; cuts to field office services, \$2 million; the Brighton veterinary lab closure, half a million; cuts to the Foodland Ontario marketing program — and they ask for marketing in that document I was reading from — \$1 million; cuts to financial assistance programs restructuring, \$300,000; cancellation of the dairy audit program, \$600,000; cuts to the agriculture investment strategy program, \$1.5 million; cuts to the tile drainage program, \$1.5 million; cuts to agricultural grants, \$730,000; cuts to the University of Guelph research programs — and research was emphasized in the document I read from — \$2 million; labour adjustment allowance, \$1.539 million; cuts to GRIP and NISA programs, \$11.3 million; closure of the Milton Ontario Agricultural Museum, \$1.8 million; restructuring of agricultural programs including further field office closures, further cuts to GRIP and NISA, and cuts to the international marketing program, \$8.3 million; eliminating of ministry services, including requiring commodity groups to pay for the administration of grading enforcement and regulation, and cuts to laboratory services, research programs and education programs, \$31.3 million; administrative savings — I'm inclined to agree with administrative savings — \$10.7 million; and cuts to food land program promotion and cuts to the municipal outlet drainage program, \$6.4 million.

These total \$85.169 million. Perhaps we can discuss those at a later date when I feel in a more provocative mood.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Ms Martel: I am pleased to participate in the debate — I believe the amendment to the amendment to the throne speech is where we are at this point — and I wanted to begin by saying that as I listened to the throne

speech being read by Her Honour, I was struck by two things.

First, it was the most blatant attempt by the government to now try to portray itself as somehow being kinder and gentler.

I was particularly struck by the line that your government was listening. I guess the government, in all the extensive polling it has done, has figured out, as everyone else has figured out, that if anything, what the government hasn't done is listen to people. Whether you talk about what happened on the megacity debate, whether you talk about what happened around Bill 160 and people's concerns with that, a whole host of issues, this government has not listened. I think this government is hearing very strongly from people as it does its polling that this is one of the main criticisms about this government.

The government tried to say on a number of occasions in a number of places in the throne speech that they were listening, that they were going to slow down the agenda, that the agenda from here on in was somehow going to be kinder and gentler, that people were going to be happier about what was happening. That is a far cry from, I think, the reality that most Ontarians are facing now as they look at the cuts that have happened to health care, the cuts that have happened to education, the cuts that have happened to social services, the cuts that are happening to people's communities.

The second thing I was particularly struck by was the gap between the excessive government rhetoric and the reality that is facing people in the province today.

The government talked about excellence in education. That was part of the rhetoric. The reality is that this government has withdrawn almost \$1 billion from education since its arrival in this place, and that has had a profound impact on classrooms and the quality of education in this province.

You only have to go back to your riding and talk to parents about the increased class size and what that's doing to their children; about the cuts to special education and what that's doing to some of the most vulnerable in our classrooms today; about the cuts to art and to music and to recreation programs and the impact that's having on kids and the quality of not only their education but their social wellbeing as they move through the education system.

Talk to people about the custodial staff who have been let go, about the teachers who have been laid off, about the non-teaching staff — secretaries etc — who are being let go. This government has had a profound impact on the quality of education. It has nothing to do with excellence. You can't take that kind of money out of education and provide a quality public education in this province.

What concerns me is that the funding formula, as it is structured, continues to make cuts right across this province and continues to leave boards with the very difficult decision of having to close schools, lay off more teachers, cut special-ed totally — if they haven't yet — and any number of other serious problems that will lead not to

quality education but to a much poorer education for all the students who are coming through at this time.

Look at the comment the government made with respect to front-line nursing staff. The government said that more front-line nursing staff will be hired as a result of the announcement they made on long-term care. The government conveniently neglected to talk about the 10,000 nurses who have been laid off by this government, since it came to this place, in the acute care sector, in the hospital sector, the 10,000 nurses who now are not providing quality care to some of the people who are most in need, who require acute care in Ontario's hospitals. There is a huge gap in reality with respect to what those workers deal with now, as they are laid off, and with respect to patients right across this province, in hospital after hospital, who can't get the care they need, who now have to rely on their families to come in and provide the care that used to be provided by a qualified nurse.

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I was also struck by the gap with respect to the athletes and youth and funding for amateur sports in this province. I was very proud of our Ontario athletes who participated at the Olympics. We all were. It was good to have them recognized in the throne speech. The irony is that this government was the one that cut, under the former minister, funding for youth programs, youth recreation in this province. How will we fund those people we want to be, hopefully, our athletes for the future? There was a huge gap there between what we all saw and what we were all proud of during the Olympics and what the government really did with respect to programs for youth to get our athletes there.

What most concerned me was both the gap and the very blatant omission with respect to children. There was one section only in the throne speech, as far as I can see, that talked about kids. It said the following: "The government has already increased the funds available for early learning. World-renowned expert Dr Fraser Mustard and child advocate the honourable Margaret McCain will head a study of early learning, and make recommendations on how best to prepare young and preschool children for a lifetime of education." That's the government rhetoric.

The reality is that it was this government that decided that junior kindergarten would be optional, no longer mandatory, despite the myriad of studies that have been done which clearly demonstrate the benefit of intervention early on in the school system of our kids, and how that benefits them, how that ensures they will have better opportunities. It was this government that got rid of mandatory JK.

It was this government as well that decided it would cut funding to junior kindergarten, making it very difficult for those boards that wanted to continue with their JK programs to do that. I think under the new funding formula that you've announced, you'll see more and more boards, the ones that still have JK programs continuing, being put in a position where they'll have to get rid of them.

There's a huge contradiction between asking Dr Fraser Mustard now to do a study and not implementing some of

the major recommendations he has already put to this government with respect to how we should intervene early with kids in a number of areas, education included. We're going to do a study, while at the same time the government has already made major cuts to the education of preschool children.

What was most serious for me was the gap with respect to anything else to do with children. The throne speech was silent on the terrible scenario that faces Ontario now, which is that more children than ever before live in poverty in this province. It is a national shame that in a time when we are very prosperous in this province, and we are, the gap between the rich and the poor is growing, and at the bottom end more and more children are going without adequate housing, without adequate nutrition, without adequate health care. We should not be in a position today, and we are — I cannot believe the government had nothing to say about this — that one in four kids in this city alone lives in poverty now. Surely, this Mike Harris government should have had something to say about what it intends to do to deal with the very serious and very shocking and frankly appalling situation.

You only have to look at where the government has been with respect to kids to understand why the government didn't come forward with a strategy. Frankly, in any number of portfolios over the last two years this government has harmed children by its cuts to programs, by its funding cuts has done more to harm children and to ensure that more kids live in poverty than ever before. So it's no wonder they had nothing positive to say about kids in this throne speech.

Let me just run through some of what this government has done to kids in the last two years. This government cancelled the Early Years project. It was a voluntary project that we put in place to allow a pilot for full-day JK and SK across the province. We took that from the work we did on the Royal Commission on Learning, from their document, *Love of Learning*. It also will be one of the studies that Dr Fraser Mustard will probably look at and I hope he will come forward with the same recommendation. But this government cancelled that project as one of the first things it did in the first six weeks that it was here in this place.

Second, the government made JK optional. The government also cut funding on the education side to those boards that wanted to try to continue with their JK programming. As I said earlier, under the new funding formula, I think most boards will have to totally eliminate JK if they still have been able to carry it this far.

There has been a \$1-billion cut in education. It has affected special ed, libraries, all of the things I talked about earlier.

Finally, the government, under Bill 160, also announced there would be no more capital available to build child care centres in new high schools. If you are a young person who is trying to get back into the education system, to get your education, to get going again on a better start, you can't even be guaranteed that in the high school you go to your child will be able to be looked after. You will

have to worry about informal child care arrangements and whether or not you feel secure with that.

If the government really cared about even education, as it purports to in the throne speech, none of these cuts would have happened, none of these cuts would have been made under the education budget, because they have all dramatically affected kids.

What has the government done with respect to child care? The government in its download exercise has dumped a number of the costs of child care on to the municipalities. The minister wanted to say they would pass a regulation that would still force municipalities to provide child care, but if the municipality doesn't have the money to do that, then who will?

This government, when it cancelled the Jobs Ontario Training program, already forced the loss of a number of child care spaces that were being funded through that program. Now we have the scenario that municipalities, trying to cope with all of the other costs that have been dumped on them by this government, are going to try to scramble to find some money to pay for child care. I think, regrettably, that in a number of municipalities you will see the child care spaces that are there being cut or being eliminated entirely because the municipalities won't have the money to continue to pay for them.

The government also, in its budget of 1996, announced \$200 million for an expansion of child care spaces. It was supposed to be \$40 million over five years. In the first year there was not a single penny spent by this government for the expansion of spaces — not a single penny in the budget year 1996-97. After we lost that \$40 million, the Treasurer came to this place and announced that now they were going to redirect the money that was left. It wasn't \$200 million any more; it was down to \$160 million, even though the \$40 million hadn't been spent. It was going to redirect that money into a tax credit for parents using the child care system in the province and it would go into effect this year.

The problem with the tax credit is that you've got to pay for child care up front. People who are living in poverty or who have a low income in this province don't have the kind of money that it takes to pay for a child care space up front. That's why we need to have more subsidized spaces in the province. That's what we thought some of the \$200 million was going to be spent on. But instead, this government has decided they'll give a tax credit. The problem will be that the parents, most of them single, who need a space most, will be completely unable to access it because the government has done nothing to deal with subsidized spaces and because they can't afford to pay for the child care up front in order to get a tax credit back.

Finally, the government — and the Minister of Community and Social Services was the one responsible for this — brought forward a report in September 1996 which looked at proposals for a major change in how child care was delivered in the province. While there hasn't been much said with respect to that document, certainly the minister, in her new position, has not said whether or not she now agrees with some of those recommendations or

whether or not the government is just going to let that report go by the wayside. I would argue that it should let that report go by the wayside because what it did was to affect child care in a number of ways, all of them, frankly, very detrimental.

1710

The government proposed to eliminate some of the protection regarding the annual licensing for child care operators, weaken important health and safety standards in child care centres, increase the number of children to be cared for by one staff, reduce some of the physical requirements for child care facilities like natural light, reduce the qualifications for staff caring for school-age children, eliminate or reduce wage subsidies for child care staff, let home providers care for more children after hours, reduce the support available through resource centres to help licensed child care centres.

This is where the government was heading with respect to child care, and these proposals were totally opposed by the child care community because they recognized that it would not provide quality child care but a patchwork system of spaces across the province, some of them well funded, some not well funded, with different standards of care depending on who the operator was and so on. I hope the minister at some point soon will stand in her place and say that the government was wrong to even consider this direction, the report is going nowhere, and they will not make those kinds of very detrimental changes to the system that she herself proposed.

If I look at social services as a third area with respect to what the government has done, I have to focus on the 22% cut to social assistance this government made early on. A most interesting report was released just two days ago with respect to the link between income and how children do, income in the home and how they do later on. It says:

"The Canada Council on Social Development compared family income with the new data from StatsCan continuing survey of children and youth and found that it was the key differential in 31 different outcomes and living conditions for children. Children aged four to 11 from poorer families were in worse health, were far more hyperactive, had poorer vocabulary and math scores, participated in fewer sports and had more friends who got into trouble than those from better-off homes," said David Roth, executive director of the research group.

"As family income goes up, the incidence of each of those risk factors goes down.

"For the first time in Canada, hard statistical evidence is now both abundant and compelling, yet family income has a major impact on children's wellbeing."

I thought it was appalling that one of the first acts of this government was to cut social assistance by 22%. Of the people who were receiving assistance, some 400,000 were children, who have no voice in our society, children who have no way to fight back, children who now find themselves or their parents, be they single moms or two-parent households, relying on food banks in order to make ends meet. This government went ahead and cut the poorest

est of the poor and has left the poorest of the poor in desperate situations. There will be repercussions for this whole society in terms of ongoing increased health costs, in terms of ongoing increased costs when children come into conflict with the law and increased costs when children drop out of school early on. All of those things are going to happen, because it is very clear that when the income in the household drops and people, especially kids, can't get what they need with respect to basic shelter, food and health care, that's the kind of ongoing social cost we're all going to have to pay for.

I deeply regret that the government has now seen fit as well to cut \$37 from pregnant women who are on social assistance, who used to use that money to buy fresh fruit and fresh vegetables. I cannot believe we have stooped to a position in this province where we would cut \$37 from people who are already the poorest. I was totally appalled by the Premier's comment that he wanted to do this to make sure those women didn't spend it on beer. That tells you a lot about the Premier and where this government is heading, it really does.

This government, in terms of social services, has done a number of other things: eliminated the children's services coordinating advisory groups that used to coordinate all the programs and services aimed at kids at risk; eliminated community and neighbourhood support services, which provided family support programs and community programs for children and the disabled; cut funding to children's mental health by 5%; cut all of the funding for the Little Beavers program, which was a recreation program geared to native kids; cut funding to the CAS by 5%. In that respect we had a study that was just released two days ago which made it very clear that despite the rhetoric of this current Minister of Community and Social Services, the situation for kids at risk in the care of children's aid societies is not improving.

The study said the following:

"Small children are being bounced from one foster home to group home to another as often as every few months; a computer system that will stop abused children from falling through administrative cracks promised a year ago is still not up and running; and the provincial government's promises last year to reform child welfare law have not materialized."

Despite all the rhetoric from this Minister of Community and Social Services about how they were reviewing and dealing with child welfare, kids who are at risk are now at risk more than ever before, and there are more of them.

With respect to cuts to family violence programs and cuts to programs dealing with women, this government cut funding to emergency shelters. A number of women take their kids and flee, and that funding has been cut. They cut all of the funding for counselling at second-stage housing for those women and their kids who were trying to get out of the shelter and back into a normal life. That transition stage, all the funding cut. All of the funding cut for crisis intervention phone lines. Never mind what the government

did with respect to the family support plan and all the kids they put at risk there.

I think society is judged on how it treats its most vulnerable, and the mark of a decent society is how we look after those who are most vulnerable. I have to say that I think in the last two years this government has done an appalling job with respect to that issue.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr O'Toole: It's my privilege to respond to the comments from the member for Sudbury East, and I did pay particular attention to a couple of items. Talk about listening — I know just in the last few months with the House — I know it has been in session longer than you sat for the whole last year, and we've been working in our ridings. In my riding I've had Minister Villeneuve, the Minister of Agriculture, Minister Tsubouchi, Mr Flaherty, Minister Jackson; indeed I've had the Premier in the riding listening to my constituents. These are constituents who are not, as you might suggest, handpicked.

You talk of a whole list of cuts that you presume to have been imposed on the people of Ontario. One of the most important cuts will be announced next week, which is a 30% tax cut, and the people are long overdue on that.

I challenge the member for Sudbury East with respect to spending in education. In fact, we're spending more in education than you spent in education. Look up your numbers. We have not cut from education. In fact, the cuts you made in education were called the social contract. Look into the details. In that particular contract alone, you kept \$700 million, I think. Anyway, with respect to cuts in education, I believe we've put education spending back in the classroom.

Many of the initiatives, I might suggest, were started by your government: the Sweeney commission, which looked up the amount of administration in schools; the College of Teachers. Many of the initiatives improved the quality of education. In fact, read the Maclean's article from this month, April 8 I think it was. It ranked Ontario as the highest-spending jurisdiction in Canada.

With respect to children's services, we have a minister of children's services, the Honourable Margaret Marland, and I put to you that the biggest deterrent that you put on people is family income, which you commented on. You put people on welfare. Imagine the impact on future and hope in their lives. You did nothing for the people. Think about it.

Mr Caplan: I'd like to thank the member for Sudbury East for her excellent presentation. She focused many of her comments on the plight of children in this province, and the government's record is absolutely abysmal when it comes to children and the way it has dealt with our youngest and some of our most vulnerable citizens.

It's interesting to note, and I heard the last speaker talk about the government's commitment to education, which is astounding, since 60,000 kids in this province have been denied junior kindergarten since these guys took over. Now they're going to fund a study from Fraser Mustard to tell them about the importance of early childhood education, early childhood development. Absolutely ridiculous.

The jury is in. The Royal Commission on Education is just one of the latest studies which has shown the importance of this. The time to act on it isn't after another study. That's just a delaying tactic.

The member also quite rightly highlighted some of the findings of the child advocate which just came out as well, and it shows that abused and neglected children in this province who go into the provincial systems for care get bounced around so many times that they are damaged, if you will, even more than when they entered that system.

If we have a minister responsible for children, I call upon her and I call upon this government to actually do something to help these kids. The response has been to cut their benefits, to reduce the level of services they're able to get while in provincial care. It's an absolutely appalling record. I think they would do well to implement the First Steps program that the Liberal Party and Dalton McGuinty have suggested.

1720

Mr Wildman: I listened intently to my friend from Sudbury East and her presentation, which centred on the plight of children under this government. I appreciated the research she has done into all the various cuts that have hurt children in this province as a result of the callous government we have.

I also appreciated the obvious concern and feeling she expressed as she spoke because of her commitment to the cause of children and equity in Ontario. I think it contrasted very well with the approach expressed by the member for Durham East in commenting on her remarks. In his remarks he essentially said that giving people a decent income when they are facing difficulty was harming them. That was what he said. Basically, he said that by giving people social assistance we hurt people, that by giving them a decent income we hurt people. Therefore, I guess conversely, by cutting their income we actually help them. How perverse.

This is a government that really believes — just think about this — that by cutting poor people they're helping them, and they also have to give money to the wealthy in a tax break. Basically, this is a government that believes that the poor have too much money and the wealthy don't have enough. Think about that. The poor have too much money and the wealthy don't have enough. You have to cut the poor's income and you have to give more income to the wealthy.

It's about time this government woke up to the fact that the wealthy are by definition rich and don't need more money and the poor by definition do need assistance.

Mr Hastings: It was interesting to listen to the member from Nickel Belt and how she seems to have amnesia about the fact that every action has a reaction. I'm wondering if in her well-documented research she has thought about the impact of huge deficits and of huge debt on future generations. It seems to be something that the members of the New Debtors Party always forget about. Like, you don't pay any interest; it's nothing to worry about.

How does that translate back to her concerns dealing with children? It's quite obvious that prior to the June 8,

1995, election you had hundreds of thousands of new people on the welfare system. It seemed to be a badge of honour that you were collecting welfare, which most people do not want to do; that that was somehow sort of an achievement in this province.

How does this impact on children in terms of being able to provide them services? If you didn't have any of these huge deficits, large debts, you'd have that money freed up for the very vital programs she talks about. I can see there is a necessity in that particular part of her remarks.

She dismisses us as having an appalling mismanagement record. We can apply the same words right back to her and her previous government from 1990 to 1995, when they racked up tons and tons of bills. If all the money that was spent had been spent more responsibly, we'd have fewer problems with children's poverty today. But I don't see that as the result of all the expenditures, not at all. It's a legacy of debt. It's a direct attack on the vulnerable.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Sudbury East has two minutes to respond.

Ms Martel: Thank you to the members for Oriole and Algoma for their comments.

Let me say to the member for Durham East, who says there hasn't been a cut to education, that if you take the lead from his Treasurer and you add up all the capital budget for education and you throw in the teachers' pension plan as well, along with the operating budget for education, you probably will have more money for education. Interestingly enough, that's not the way the boards calculate how much money they're going to get and that's not the way it was ever calculated before in this province either. The only reason this government can stand in its place and claim that more money is being spent is if you throw in the capital on to the operating budget and the teachers' pension plan. But no one is very much fooled by that sleight-of-hand.

The member also talked about welfare in terms of — well, I don't even know what he said about welfare, honest to goodness, it was so ridiculous. I guess the member is saying he's quite proud to be a member of the government, that of the people that got cut, of the 400,000 kids that got cut, that was okay. It's okay that the government cut 22% from welfare and that you've now got in Metro one in four kids living in poverty. That's all right, that's a record he's proud of. Well, that's a record he will have to defend later on.

With respect to the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, who talked about deficits, that if we didn't have large deficits we would have more money to spend on children, this is the government that is going to take and is taking \$5 billion out of our health care system, out of our education system, out of our communities and out of our spending for kids and giving it back in the form of a phoney tax scheme, giving those people who have the most in the province even more.

Speaking of deficits, the deficit we are inheriting because we are losing a whole generation of kids due to your

cuts to children is a social deficit we will live with for a long, long time and one that is shameful.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? I recognize the member for Kitchener.

Mr Michael Brown: Oh, I was hoping you'd speak.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): Mr Brown, the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, said he was hoping I would speak. I appreciate that.

As a member of this government, the one particular aspect of the throne speech that I would like to touch on is the provincial economy. As you well remember, when we assumed the reins of government, the government faced what seemed to be the insurmountable task of bringing what had been for five previous years uncontrolled, upward-spiralling provincial spending under some control. This spending had resulted in a debt of \$100 billion, a provincial debt of \$100 billion. That produced interest to the tune of \$9 billion a year, roughly 17% of the total provincial budget. Some 17% of the entire provincial budgeted revenues were going to pay interest on the debt, interest rates that were escalating at a rate of \$750 million a month, or \$173 million a week, \$24 million a day, or over \$1 million an hour.

Mr Michael Brown: What is it today?

Mr Wettlaufer: Mr Brown, I'm going to be pleased to answer. Just let me get to that.

What makes these figures even more grotesque is the fact that the magnitude of the interest to service the debt is more than we can afford to spend on primary school education, is more than we can afford to spend on universities and colleges and is 35% more than we can afford to spend on hospitals.

Added to this overall financial mismanagement problem was the fact that the federal Liberal government raided Ontario taxpayers by \$2.1 billion in educational and social transfer payments, without so much as a murmur of protest from their provincial cousins, the Ontario Liberal Party. The Ontario Liberals apparently believe it is all right for their federal cousins to raid Ontario taxpayers. In their minds, they view the federal Liberal raid on transfer payments as just another tax increase for Ontarians, something with which the provincial Liberals are very comfortable.

1730

It is hard to fathom how the two former governments — one being Liberal; the other being NDP — could increase taxes 65 times in 10 years and still end up with a provincial debt load of \$100 billion. Imagine, 65 tax increases and a burgeoning debt to \$100 billion. That's an example of total, incompetent mismanagement. There is a direct relationship between high government debt, high taxes and job creation. The twin towers of high government debt and high taxes destroy private sector initiative; they destroy job creation initiatives on the part of the private sector.

Since assuming the reins of government, the Mike Harris team, under the leadership of the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Ernie Eves, has reduced taxes 30 times. The opposition parties continue to strum the same old song

that they sang during the election campaign. "Tax cuts are bad for the economy," they say.

Mr Michael Brown: How much in hours a day?

Mr Wettlaufer: What's that, Mr Brown?

Mr Michael Brown: How much an hour?

Mr Wettlaufer: We'll get to that. This debate is no longer one of philosophic economic policy differences. This debate can now be viewed in terms of the actual impact of allowing taxpayers to keep some of their hard-earned money. Let's take a look at the financial and economic impact of this government's policies revolving around tax reductions.

Every day, you can pick up the newspaper and find something in the newspaper that talks about what has happened in Ontario. "Ontario Leads Parade of Jobs." Here's an editorial from the Kitchener-Waterloo Record dated April 25: "There simply had to be changes in this province and the Tories were right to make most of them." There is no way this could be done pain-free. Partly as a result, Ontario has now regained its stature as Canada's economic powerhouse. More people are working, fewer are unemployed or on welfare.

The previous speaker, the member from Sudbury, talked about poverty. Poverty is the result of people being on welfare, the result of people being unemployed. That occurred during the previous government's reign of terror; that occurred during the previous government's reign of mismanagement.

Then we have another newspaper column, Canadian Press, "Industry Capacity Highest Since '80s," the highest since the 1980s. The International Monetary Fund forecasts, "Canada Will Lead in Economic Growth," with 3.2% growth in GDP forecast for 1998. Where is the bulk of that growth? It's in Ontario, as a result of our fiscal policies.

Here, in another column by the Canadian Press, "The Canadian economy, which had a great year with growth of almost 4% in 1997, will continue to expand at a good clip of about 3% both this year and next...."

"That's largely the result of strong growth in Ontario and Quebec." Ontario, the leader of the country's economy.

There have been 341,000 net new private sector jobs created in the province of Ontario as a result of our economic policies since September 1995; 261,000 of those jobs were created in the private sector since February 1997, only 15 months. What is just as exciting about those figures is the projected continued increase in the number of new jobs which will be created over the next 24 months. We in Ontario have the fastest job creation in all of Canada. More Ontarians are working than at any other time in this province's history.

Where are these jobs being created? They are being created in all economic sectors. Small, medium and large-sized companies are all flourishing in Ontario. Again, the largest number of jobs is being created in the small business sector. Some 85% of all jobs created in the province are being created in the small business sector. As a government, we can take great comfort in this fact. The

growth in small business means that the economic base of the province is diverse. It ensures increased stability should the overall North American economy slow its pace at all.

The growth in the small business sector means the government is being successful in allowing the creative, entrepreneurial spirit to develop and thrive. Small businesses are most often created when an individual decides to invest his or her own time and wealth in a venture which he or she conceives. Today, as a result of our policies, thousands of these small businesses are being created. Many of these small, one-person businesses will expand into two-person, three-person and four-person businesses.

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): They'll learn.

Mr Wettlaufer: "They'll learn," my colleague from Etobicoke-Humber adds. That's correct. This is the natural process of job growth in the small business sector.

When the NDP was in power there was another process. Small businesses were being developed then too, but that was as a result of large businesses becoming small through their economic policies.

Today small businesses are flourishing, and the flourishing nature of the small business sector in the province can be considered an era of entrepreneurial renaissance. It is an era in which anyone in the province with any foresight and determination to pursue their dreams of going into business can have the opportunity to do so. This is an era in which there has been a surge in the diversity of the types of new companies being established. Consequently there is a parallel surge in the new jobs being created. Our province can look forward to a strong economic base for the foreseeable future.

In my own Waterloo region the evidence of economic prosperity is there for anyone to see. We have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country. Larger companies, such as Babcock and Wilcox in the city of Cambridge, recently announced the signing of an international multimillion-dollar deal which ensures employment for years to come. The Toyota plant, also in Cambridge, is undergoing a major expansion and will be a major employer for years to come.

While these employers are in Cambridge, it has a dramatic effect on my riding of Kitchener, because Kitchener and Cambridge adjoin each other. Medium-sized companies in Kitchener such as Sutherland and Schultz, Kuntz Electroplating, ATS — Automated Tooling Systems that is — S-S Technologies, and Waterloo companies such as Mortice-Kerns and Research in Motion are successfully competing on a provincial, national and international level, and weekly there are new jobs being created, new businesses being created.

This is indeed a good time to be living in Ontario. It's a good time to be a member of this government. We have shown the initiative and leadership necessary to create a strong economic base, to turn the province's economic fortunes around. Today consumer confidence is the highest it has been in 10 years. Over the first 11 months of 1997, housing starts rose by 27% in Ontario. Ontario home

resales also rose, by 7.7%. Ontario's export industries are growing, with international exports having increased by 6.7%. In nine months, year over year, 1996-97, more jobs in the export industries, more jobs in the domestic industries. Over the first nine months of 1997, Ontario manufacturing shipments rose 6.9% over 1996. That means manufacturers are increasing their workforces, creating more jobs.

1740

You know what I find particularly satisfying? Contrary to what critics would believe, the 30 tax reductions introduced by this government have resulted in a direct increase in revenues for this government. The revenue outlook for budget year 1997-98 is \$50.3 billion, which is \$1.7 billion above the original estimates. I find that really ironic because in the years of high taxes governments were having trouble with revenues. Why is that?

It's pretty easy to see when we look at the news clippings, and we see here in a column in the Kitchener-Waterloo Record, Friday, March 6, 1998, "High Taxes Mean Big Business for the Underground Economy." "High taxes create tax cheats," it says here.

People are more willing to pay taxes; also, people have jobs in which they pay taxes. Incomes have been rising. They pay more taxes. Low taxes are beneficial for everyone.

Not only is this government on target to eliminate its deficit by the year 2000, the government is actually ahead of schedule. The 1997-98 deficit, at \$5.6 billion, is down \$988 million from the budget plan, nearly \$1 billion.

The rapid growth in the number of new private sector jobs being created in all private sectors, our being ahead of schedule in all our deficit targets, and our provincial revenues higher than projected are irrefutable proof that this government has established the correct economic direction for the province of Ontario. The throne speech clearly spells out the overall direction this government will maintain, and Ontarians in all parts of the province can continue to look to the future with optimism.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Michael Brown: I'm always interested in the comments of the member for Kitchener. I'm afraid he might even believe his own rhetoric.

What I really wanted to ask right off the top was, how much does it cost to borrow by the hour today? It is substantially higher than it was three years ago because you have run record deficits. The period from 1990 to 1995 was the only period where deficits were higher than the ones you're running. I'm always quite entertained by that thought.

Anyway, that's not what I wanted to speak about. I wanted to speak about what this government is really all about. What the government is really all about is illustrated by this. Lord Gladstone once said you can judge a society by the manner in which it looks after its dead.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: And the results.

Mr Michael Brown: You didn't really mean that.

I would say to you, you can judge your government by the way it looks after its dead. It was just brought to my

attention that the government will not pay any longer to bury homeless people in the province of Ontario, it will not pay to bury an indigent who wasn't on welfare. I cannot think of a smaller government than that.

I would quote Alex Munter. "If you die on welfare, the province will cover part of the bill. But if you're elderly or working poor, it's just too bad. It's distasteful, ruthless and really disappointing that even in death people can't have some dignity," said the Ottawa regional councillor. He called the plan "small-minded meanness," and that is your legacy.

Mr Wildman: I listened carefully to my friend from Kitchener-Wilmot and his remarks about the economy, his glowing description of the situation in Ontario today. He's on the one hand taking credit as a government for what he calls "the booming economy," but on the other hand he seems to be saying that government doesn't really have a role, that it is really what he described as the entrepreneurial spirit that creates jobs. If he says it really is the small business sector and the entrepreneurial spirit that creates jobs on the one hand, how is it on the other he can take credit as a government?

On the other hand, I do believe that in some areas of the province we lag seriously behind. I say this very sincerely. There are parts of the province where the market does not work well for the residents. For instance, I come from a part of the province in the north where we are seeing an out-migration of population. We were at one time about one million people in northern Ontario; we're now at about 800,000. The average age is increasing. Twenty-five years ago in Sault Ste Marie the average age was 26; it is now 38.

The fact is, young people are leaving because they do not have opportunities. This is something that has been ongoing. I'm not saying it's just during this government's time. It's been ongoing for 20 years. If we leave it to the market, that situation will continue. Governments must intervene at times to counter the market.

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I'd like to commend the member for Kitchener for an outstanding speech where he outlined so many positive aspects of what this government is all about. He talked about the number of jobs we've created in this province since June 1995, some 325,000 jobs, and that's in all ridings across the province.

The member for Kitchener also spoke about the 30 tax cuts this government has brought in. We all anxiously await that budget on Tuesday, when I'm sure there will be some more tax cuts for the people of Ontario. That's 30 tax cuts to date. In the 10 years ending 1995, the previous Liberal and NDP governments, as the member for Kitchener so rightly pointed out, had 65 tax hikes. If you look at the five years from 1990 to 1995, when the NDP was in office, their 32 tax hikes actually generated a loss of 10,000 jobs in this province. What we've seen is that 30 tax cuts have equalled so far, to date, 325,000 jobs in the province of Ontario.

The member for Kitchener also talked about the federal government and the fact that they have cut \$2.1 billion in

transfer payments to the province of Ontario. They seem to be getting off scot-free on that. But despite that \$2.1-billion reduction, we have increased health care spending in this province. The editorial in the *Toronto Sun* today is talking about our \$1.2-billion investment in long-term care. It says: "No Ontario government in the past decade has been willing to come to grips with the pressing need for more long-term care with our aging population. Not one new publicly funded bed has been provided since 1988."

That's over 10 years ago. This government is taking action on health care, tax cuts, and we're seeing the benefits of that today in Ontario.

1750

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I listened with some care to the member's speech and, as is his wont, it was quite lively and entertaining. It is true, and nowhere is it more true than Waterloo county, that there is an evident prosperity. I was in Kitchener the other day; I was in Listowel. That part of southwestern Ontario is pulsing with prosperity.

I remember a time not long ago when it was not the case. I hope it never rains; I hope the prosperity is endless. I can remember a time in Kitchener city when the news was not very good.

I was driving back from the county last night from my home in Pembroke and I was listening to CBC Ideas talking about Davos. They were playing back some tapes from Davos 1992, the Japanese miracle, and how the theologians were all of one mind, that this was a sun that would never set.

Today, one of the reasons Ontario is doing better than British Columbia is that British Columbia's economy is in the tank, to a significant extent because of what's happening in southeast Asia.

Yes, it is prosperous, and no one is more happy than I, but prosperity is not everywhere the same. I was in some of the small towns in Renfrew county in the last few weeks and, let me tell you, Killaloe and Barry's Bay and Eganville, the small business sector in those communities and in Glengarry county, are doing better but not nearly as well as Waterloo and as London and as North York.

You know all the comments that have been made about taxes. There's no doubt that governments raised taxes in earlier days, but I was here between 1981 and 1985 and I watched Mike Harris and Ernie Eves. I watched them raise taxes by the dozen. They raised income taxes; they raised sales taxes. They initiated taxes on things like

women's hygiene products. They bought a three-quarter-of-a-billion-dollar interest in an oil company. They bought an executive jet.

Hon Mrs Ecker: No, we didn't.

Mr Conway: Oh, yes, there are sins, but we'd better be ecumenical in recognizing the responsibility for those —

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Kitchener. He has two minutes to respond.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: I'd like a little bit of order here, please.

Mr Wettlaufer: Mr Speaker, I can't even hear myself think. I don't know how you can hear me.

The responses from the members of the other party are so indicative of their total lack of understanding of financial management. It indicates why we got into the problem in the first place.

The member for Algoma-Manitoulin wants to know how much we were borrowing by the hour. The interest payments by the hour now are about \$250 million less than they were when the last government was there.

Mr Michael Brown: An hour?

Mr Wettlaufer: Sorry, \$250,000 an hour. That is simply a reflection of the fact that governments in Ontario now are showing that we can manage things properly. We don't have to borrow foreign dollars and therefore the interest rates have gone down, not just here but in the rest of the country. The impact of this province's borrowing amounts to a quarter to half a point on the interest rate.

The member for Algoma says the government doesn't create jobs, yet we create the environment for jobs. That's right. We create the environment for jobs. We don't need to create the jobs if we create the environment.

Here is something that has been furnished to me. The Niagara area, which had the highest unemployment rate in the country before we got elected, now has one of the lowest unemployment rates — 7.2%, which is lower than even the provincial average. Here we have a projection of the jobs required in the Niagara area in the next couple of years: a total of 53,000 new jobs in an area with a population of 400,000. Obviously they are going to have to have massive immigration into the area.

The Acting Speaker: It being almost 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:30 tonight.

The House adjourned at 1757.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma	Wildman, Bud (ND)	Fort York	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Frontenac-Addington	Vankoughnet, Bill (PC)
Beaches-Woodbine	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)
Brampton North / -Nord	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Guelph	Elliott, Brenda (PC)
Brampton South / -Sud	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Halton Centre / -Centre	Young, Terence H. (PC)
Brant-Haldimand	Preston, Peter L. (PC)	Halton North / -Nord	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Brantford	Johnson, Ron (PC)	Hamilton Centre / -Centre	Christopherson, David (ND)
Bruce	Fisher, Barbara (PC)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Burlington South / -Sud	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Seniors Issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (Affaires des personnes âgées)	Hamilton Mountain	Pettit, Trevor (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Ross, Lillian (PC)
Carleton	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of the Environment, government House leader / ministre de l'Environnement, leader parlementaire du gouvernement	Hastings-Peterborough	Danford, Harry (PC)
Carleton East / -Est	Morin, Gilles E. (L)	High Park-Swansea	Shea, Derwyn (PC)
Chatham-Kent	Carroll, Jack (PC)	Huron	Johns, Helen (PC)
Cochrane North / -Nord	Wood, Len (ND)	Kenora	Miclash, Frank (L)
Cochrane South / -Sud	Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Cornwall	Cleary, John C. (L)	Kitchener	Wetlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Don Mills	Johnson, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Education and Training / ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation	Kitchener-Wilmot	Leadston, Gary L. (PC)
Dovercourt	Silipo, Tony (ND)	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	Pouliot, Gilles (ND)
Downsview	Castrilli, Annamarie (L)	Lambton	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Dufferin-Peel	Tilson, David (PC)	Lanark-Renfrew	Jordan, W. Leo (PC)
Durham Centre / -Centre	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Labour, Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / ministre du Travail, solliciteur général et ministre des Services correctionnels	Lawrence	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
Durham East / -Est	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Lecds-Grenville	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
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Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)	Mississauga North / -Nord	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Etobicoke-Rexdale	Hastings, John (PC)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Children's Issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (enfance)
Etobicoke West / -Ouest	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Speaker / Président	Mississauga West / -Ouest	Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Privatization) / ministre sans portefeuille (privatisation)
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		Nepean	Baird, John R. (PC)
		Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)

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Nipissing	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Sault Ste Marie / Sault-Sainte-Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)
Norfolk	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Newman, Dan (PC)
Oakville South / -Sud	Carr, Gary (PC)	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Oakwood	Colle, Mike (L)	Scarborough-Ellesmere	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)
Oriole	Caplan, David (L)	Scarborough North / -Nord	Curling, Alvin (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Scarborough West / -Ouest	Brown, Jim (PC)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)
Ottawa East / -Est	Grandmaître, Bernard (L)	Simcoe East / -Est	McLean, Allan K. (PC)
Ottawa-Rideau	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Simcoe West / -Ouest	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa West / -Ouest	Cullen, Alex (L)	Sudbury East / -Est	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Timiskaming	Ramsay, David (L)
Parkdale	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Victoria-Haliburton	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines, président du Conseil de gestion
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Perth	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Welland-Thorold	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Port Arthur	Gravelle, Michael (L)	Wentworth East / -Est	Doyle, Ed (PC)
Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Wentworth North / -Nord	Skarica, Toni (PC)
Prince Edward-Lennox- South Hastings / Prince Edward-Lennox- Hastings-Sud	Fox, Gary (PC)	Willowdale	Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Quinte	Rollins, E.J. Douglas (PC)	Wilson Heights	Kwinter, Monte (L)
Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique	Windsor-Riverside	Lessard, Wayne (ND)
Renfrew North / -Nord	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Windsor-Sandwich	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Riverdale	Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Windsor-Walkerville	Duncan, Dwight (L)
S-D-G & East Grenville / S-D-G et Grenville-Est	Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	York Centre / -Centre	Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
St Andrew-St Patrick	Bassett, Hon / L'hon Isabel (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs	York East / -Est	Parker, John L. (PC)
St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)	York Mills	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister without Portfolio / ministre sans portefeuille
St Catharines-Brock	Froese, Tom (PC)	York-Mackenzie	Klees, Frank (PC)
St George-St David	Leach, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Yorkview	Sergio, Mario (L)
		York South / -Sud	Kennedy, Gerard (L)
		Nickel Belt	Vacant

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Second Session, 36th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 30 April 1998

Jeudi 30 avril 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 30 April 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 30 avril 1998

The House met at 1830.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the adjourned debate on the amendment to the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I'm pleased to join the debate tonight, and I'd like to focus on those aspects of the throne speech which concern themselves with health care.

When Her Honour read the speech last week, she said in part that Ontarians want quality health care and she observed that in recent months her Ontario government had come to understand that there was a great deal of worry in the community, not only about the pace of change in health care, but there was clear evidence that people were concerned about the impact of health policy changes in their daily lives.

It is on that subject that I would like to speak tonight, and I want to be highly focused about a community in my constituency, namely Cobden, and the situation that faces over 30 elderly people who are now resident in the Lakeview Nursing Home in Cobden, which is a very rural community in the heart of the Ottawa Valley, about one hour and 20 minutes' drive west of the national capital.

The story about the Lakeview Nursing Home is a very powerful story and it brings to me, as a long-time member of the Legislature, the realities of change, the realities of government's important role in providing very significant service to individuals and to a community. It also reminds me that all politics is local and all change is personal.

The Lakeview Nursing Home was established over 30 years ago in this rural village. It was established initially as a home for special care for adult psychogeriatric individuals who were being discharged from the Kingston site, from Smiths Falls, Rideau Regional Centre and from other facilities. This was a very high-needs group of psychogeriatric individuals in the main. Over time its funding was converted to a nursing home.

In 1992 the ownership of that nursing home in Cobden changed from local ownership to ownership from afar. A Dr Dar from London bought the licence on the understanding that he was going to have to rebuild the facility, which was in physical terms not in the best of shape. The condition of the sale of the licence in 1992 was based on

that understanding. While the facility was not the best of physical plants, it certainly had brought together a very excellent group of men and women who provided very good care to the 55 residents in the home in the 1990s.

Four or five years passed. Dr Dar and the Conmed group, of which he was a part, did not or could not find it within their ability to replace the facility, so it was like a bolt out of the blue in early July of last year that the people in that nursing home, the 55 residents, these very vulnerable special needs adults, were told their nursing home would be closing within weeks or months. It was Dr Dar's intention to transfer the nursing home licence out of the village of Cobden, out of the county of Renfrew and down into the Halton-Burlington area. Of course, under the Nursing Home Act, it is the decision of the Minister of Health whether that licence is transferable.

There was a public meeting held in Cobden on August 12, 1997, and I have noted since the House has resumed in the last few days the Harris government and its supporters in this assembly have said, "We are anxious to hear from the people." That's an understandable democratic impulse. After the announcement made last July that the nursing home would close in Cobden, there was a public meeting in this village of 1,000 on August 12, and 500 people jammed Memorial Hall for a full afternoon. I have never seen such a turnout in that community and I have never heard such powerful testimony.

Rev Brian Sharpe was one who came to the meeting, and there were several. This is a very distinguished man of the cloth who has a family member — I could read from his testimony, but both as a minister and as a family member he gave eloquent testimony to the quality of care his uncle and those other 55 people were receiving and had been receiving in that nursing home.

You know, the interesting thing about Lakeview in Cobden, in this wonderfully small rural community, is that it was a success in ways I suspect many people at the Ministry of Health never imagined when it was launched 30 years ago. It is a remarkable success.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): It was started under a Tory government.

Mr Conway: It was established under a Conservative government, that is true, but it was nurtured by the staff and by the community, and I know the member from Halton understands the power of these small rural and farm villages. It was a very significant success story, and now, for no apparent reason, a non-resident owner decides he wants to close the door and move the licence 300 miles to the southwest, and those very vulnerable people — you

might ask, who are these people? Our Renfrew County District Health Council prepared last summer, at the time of this great debate, a profile of who these people were, and reading from the local health council's data, let me tell you these are without a doubt the most vulnerable people I represent. These are some of the most vulnerable people not only in the province but in the country.

According to health council data, 18 of these residents were developmentally delayed, six were diagnosed with schizophrenia, 22 had Alzheimer's disease, three residents were duly diagnosed with developmental disability and psychiatric illnesses, seven residents had substance abuse problems, 40 residents are physically impaired, and as many of 32 of these residents had engaged in inappropriately aggressive or sexual behaviour in the previous 12 months. These were, by all accounts and by any reasonable standard, very vulnerable people who needed the care and the attention that the Lakeview Nursing Home was and had been providing.

The community, in a very eloquent and powerful way, from the reeve and the warden to prominent local lawyers to local business people, but most especially from family members, came by the scores and they testified, often in very tearful and dramatic fashion. It was indeed straight from the heart. I don't think there was anyone in the room that day who, after five hours of that kind of testimony, had not heard from the people.

What was the message? This Lakeview Nursing Home has been a success. Yes, the facility is not the best, but the quality of care has been excellent. It has been excellent because of the particular kind of synergy that had been developed in that rural community with family, with staff and with neighbourhood. That community expected that after 500 people had so testified over four or five hours, it was going to make a difference.

To be fair, when I raised the question of the future fate of the Lakeview Nursing Home to Mr Wilson, the then Minister of Health, he said to me in this chamber on September 23, 1997, "Mr Conway, you tell the people in Cobden we think we will get someone to make a reasonable bid for that licence, and I as minister will do everything I can to keep the facility in the community." Let me read now from Hansard, quoting Mr Wilson, Minister of Health, Tuesday, September 23, 1997, in response to my question about the future of Lakeview:

"I can assure the honourable member that if arrangements can be made at the local level to keep those licences in Cobden, the ministry will give its concurrence."

I appreciated that answer, and so did the community. That was six months ago. Under the leadership of Reeve Dave Stewart and others in the Cobden area, we got the very distinguished Victorian Order of Nurses to make a proposal, a good proposal, to give fair market value for those 55 beds in Cobden so that this not-for-profit organization, the Victorian Order of Nurses, could continue to build on the great tradition of the Lakeview Nursing Home, and a bid was made. The bid has been rejected, because apparently Dr Dar wants that licence, come hell or high water, out of Cobden and into Oakville and

Burlington. I can understand his desire, but what's the public interest?

Interjection.

Mr Conway: "Why?" says the member for Halton North. I suspect because he knows that licence is much more financially attractive and valuable to him in Halton region than it is in rural Renfrew. That's my suspicion and I think that's a reasonable suspicion.

All I know is that the community came forward and did what it was asked to do. It got a good proposal from an outstanding organization, the Victorian Order of Nurses. That was six months ago. It was rejected.

The new Minister of Health has told me privately and publicly that she continues to look at her options. I want to say here tonight that after almost 10 months have passed, not a week passes that I don't hear from the residents at Lakeview or their families or the very excellent staff at that facility.

1840

Just so you know, Cobden, as my friend from Quinte will know, is one of those farm villages that populates the glorious rural reaches of Ontario, population 1,100 people, good people, hardworking people. Lakeview last summer was the largest single employer in that community, 46 jobs. Its taxation represented 7% of the total revenue to the village of Cobden as a big employer, an important economic player in a very vital community in the rural Ottawa Valley that had a lot to brag about because it had made this very difficult concept work over 30 years.

They're patient people, they're tolerant people in Cobden, but they are starting to become very nervous and very frustrated. They want me to stand here tonight, those family members, some of whom are watching, and they want me to put on the floor of this assembly their increased concern and growing anxiety about the future of their loved ones in this nursing home, and these are, I repeat, very vulnerable people. This home has some of the highest special needs people in the province. What is their future?

All of us in politics have offered the rhetoric. We've talked about the big picture. I was pleased yesterday, as all members were, to hear the Minister of Health say, "...20,000 new long-term-care beds over the next decade." There are 35 residents — it's probably less than that — there are 31 or so residents up in Cobden, 400 kilometres northeast of here, who want me to advocate on their behalf tonight, that they're not going to get lost in the shuffle, that they are going to attract the attention of this minister, this government and this assembly. I have been through a lot over 22 years and, I'll tell you, these people deserve our attention and our support.

We had the Health Services Restructuring Commission roar through the Upper Ottawa Valley in the last 12 to 18 months. The Pembroke Civic Hospital was ordered closed. Scores of acute care and chronic care beds have been taken out of our largest city in Pembroke and there are additional plans to reduce the institutional capacity of other facilities.

We know from Ministry of Health data that our region is seriously underresourced for mental health services. As I read from that data sheet about the special needs of Lakeview, you don't have to be Albert Einstein to understand that this is substantially a mental health issue. Yes, Lakeview probably doesn't fit into some neat, tidy category, but you know it's there, it has worked. It's had 30 years of very powerful and positive acceptance, very strong family support, very good staff who care not just about their jobs, but that is obviously an issue, but they care about these residents who they know are vulnerable and anxious.

So 20,000 new beds, \$1.2 billion worth of new spending over eight years, who would not applaud that? But there are 31 people up in Cobden tonight who want to know that after 10 months of responsible petitioning, after a public meeting last summer where 500 people packed the community hall and spoke with one voice, they are going to get the consideration they are due.

These people have no consultant to advocate for them. Within the panoply of the health care debate locally, psychogeriatric residents of a small nursing home sometimes get lost even in the regional shuffle. But I repeat: These are the most vulnerable people I represent and they deserve our attention. We owe them our support.

I want to say to the Minister of Health, who's not here tonight, that her staff has been in touch on a regular basis, and I appreciate that. I know these issues are not easy, and I think I as the local member, together with the local community leadership, have been reasonable and tolerant. But the day of decision must arise, and arise soon. I want to say to the House tonight that this story of Lakeview is exactly the story that many other communities, large and small, are hearing these days as governments retrench, as programs change.

Again, the irony for me is that this is a success that grew out of the most unlikely of circumstances. When I think of the moneys we've spent, the huge institutions we've built, the efforts we've made to have communities accept what many of them would not accept, and then I go up Highway 17 west of Renfrew and look at Cobden and look at Lakeview and listen to those families talk about the caring and nurturing that their family members have received — people like Reverend Sharpe would tell you his uncle has been in that home after he's been in other homes, more significant, more flashy nursing homes, where the care and the results simply were not as good as they have been at Cobden. Vulnerable people, people who need our attention, deserve our support.

I simply want to take this opportunity tonight to say Her Honour was right when she said a week ago, "Ontarians expect quality health care." Her Majesty's government in Ontario has been hearing about a growing worry, about a pace of change in health care that's been too rapid and impacts that have been rough and ready. On behalf of 31 residents that I represent at the Lakeview Nursing Home, let me say to the House tonight that I expect, because those 31 residents at Lakeview not only expect

but deserve, their fair share of this new allocation of long-term beds and the support services.

For those of us who belong to the Christian community, let us be reminded of the injunction that we will be judged by how it is we behave relative to the least of our brethren.

Interjection: You're preaching.

Mr Conway: I am preaching, and I do so unabashedly, because these people can't hire Leslie Noble, they can't flex their muscle in the back corridors of power irrespective of who's in government. They are very vulnerable people who are crying out for attention, respect and redress. Their local member is doing what any good local member ought to do under these circumstances.

Let's recognize 30 years of success, let's build on community acceptance, let's support families and staff, and let us make sure that before this session is over, hopefully before this week is over, the 31 residents at Lakeview and their families get our attention, get our support, and can carry on in that community, in that facility or its replacement in the village of Cobden to enjoy the quality of life that all of us want them to have.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Comments and questions?

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I'd like to thank the member for Renfrew North for bringing before the House a particular burning issue in his own constituency in the town of Cobden: the need to meet the needs of very vulnerable people. I would hope the government will listen. I would hope that with the announcement that the Minister of Health has made for about \$150 million a year over the next eight years for nursing care beds, the residents at Cobden will be able to benefit.

I do point out, though, that when the member says he hopes that before the end of the session or before the end of this month or this week he has a response, my understanding is that the minister has indicated there won't be any of these new beds actually on stream until the year 2000. After all, this is \$150 million a year for eight years, and what we're looking at is eight years before the total number, the 20,000 beds that are promised, will actually be delivered.

1850

I hope that in determining beyond the issue the member for Renfrew North has raised, in determining where the beds will go, the minister and her staff will recognize that there are particular communities like Cobden that have particular needs. If we look simply at the different regions or districts and at a formula for the number of beds, it won't meet the overall needs in particular communities.

As I know has been raised in the House already, Elliot Lake, a retirement community where many, many people have moved to live out their senior years, is in particular need. About 50 people have had to leave the community because they can't get the nursing care they require. Hopefully, this government will respond.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I was pleased the member was able to put on the record this evening and to make known to the government members his desire to

see some significant changes in this area to ensure that some seniors have the kind of health care they require. I am wondering whether he is facing what we are facing in the Niagara Peninsula, and that is the potential closing of hospitals. I believe the Civic Hospital in Pembroke has had its doors closed and other hospitals are being downsized. Yet simply because people are getting older doesn't mean they do not need acute care from time to time. In fact, it is likely that as the population increases in age, those people who are elderly are going to require more acute care as well as chronic care.

In the Niagara Peninsula we have five hospitals which are teetering under an axe of some kind. We have the Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines, we have the Niagara-on-the-Lake General Hospital, we have the Fort Erie hospital, which is Douglas Memorial, we have the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital in Grimsby and we have the Port Colbourne General Hospital.

In certain other hospitals, we have proposed reductions in the number of acute care beds. Our area is a bit different, I recognize, from the area that the member for Renfrew North represents in that we have some larger urban centres, but we have some smaller centres as well. I'd be interested in his comment on the fact that 32 hospitals are either closing or are slated to close in Ontario, despite the fact that the Premier during the election campaign said he had no plans to close hospitals.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): It is for good reason that the member for Renfrew North talks about needs in his community with respect to issues of hospitals and nurses and people who need care who are not getting it, because there are a whole lot of people across the province who have the same kinds of concerns. That's why he spent much of his time obviously focusing in on that, because of this great need that we have.

You've got this government talking about this big investment of theirs. You will recall that the Minister of Finance announced in his last budget a \$2.7-billion amount to be invested in restructuring our community-based health care system. We're not sure they spent any of it. We don't believe they have. We don't see it.

But this year you have the same government announcing —

Mr Bradley: Again.

Mr Marchese: — again — that they're going to spend \$1.2 billion. Is that the same kind of money as the last year's announcement, but by half and less than half?

Not only that, but this announcement of \$1.2 billion is over an eight-year period. They've got one more year left in their mandate. After that, these boys are gone, right? And then you've got another government having to deal with these problems of health and long-term care.

Remember this: In another couple of years — we've seen this all the time — there's going to be yet another recession. At that time, you've got a \$5-billion problem you've got to worry about through your income tax scheme and then you've got a commitment to spend millions of dollars on health, and you won't have it. The money won't be there, and you're going to say: "We can't

spend it now. We gave our money away to the guys who have the big, deep pockets. Sorry for you poor folk down there who need this long-term care. We don't got the money." That's what you people are going to say then, if you're still in office, leaving the whole burden for the next government to solve.

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): It's my pleasure to respond to the member for Renfrew North, who spoke so eloquently. He spoke about long-term care. I just want to bring to his attention the Toronto Sun editorial today. It says:

"The Ontario government's \$1.2-billion investment in long-term care for the elderly is welcome and long overdue.

"This announcement, first reported in yesterday's Sun, is good news on every front. The money will fund:

"Twenty thousand new beds in nursing homes and homes for the aged.

"Improved access to community-based care for 100,000 people.

"Seventy thousand new jobs — 27,500 in health care, 42,500 in construction.

"The staggering thing, as Premier Mike Harris and Health Minister Elizabeth Witmer noted yesterday, is that no Ontario government in the past decade has been willing to come to grips with the pressing need for more long-term care for our aging population.

"Not one new publicly funded bed has been provided since 1988." That's over 10 years.

"This, despite widespread agreement years before that the shortage of long-term-care beds was creating severe backups in acute care hospitals and, thus, in hospital emergency wards.

"Unlike previous red Tory, Liberal and NDP governments, the Harris Tories have the funds to invest in long-term care because they first took on the thankless and difficult job of closing and merging 30 acute care hospitals. Yesterday's announcement mirrors recommendations by the Health Services Restructuring Commission.

"How ironic that this good news should come on the same day that the federal Liberals, who cut billions to the provinces for health care, were under attack from all sides, including from within their own caucus, for their shameful refusal to compensate all victims of hepatitis C in Canada's tainted blood disaster."

The editorial goes on to say, "Premier Harris, you did the right thing yesterday on long-term care for the elderly."

I agree with this editorial.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Renfrew North.

Mr Conway: I just want to say, particularly to Mr Newman, that it is good news and I appreciate that. My point remains that 31 people, many of them seriously challenged, are in Cobden tonight and they have heard the good news.

You will be judged by what you do. That facility has been there. It has done an excellent job in interesting circumstances. I say to my friend that really it's a matter of the licence. The home is there, the residents are there,

the staff is there. The community is very accepting and supportive. Yes, Mr Newman, it is good news that was announced yesterday. Thirty-one people at Cobden want to know if that good news is going to mean that the nearly 10 months of living hell they've had, wondering about whether or not they are going to be sent out of what has been home to most of them for over 20 years — the test of this pudding will be in the eating.

The minister has the decision and the power under the Nursing Homes Act. We're not talking about a new facility for the moment; we're talking about a facility that's there, properly licensed. The request before the minister is simply, "Will you or will you not, Mrs Witmer, approve the transfer of the licence from Cobden to Oakville-Burlington?" She has the power.

I recognize the complexity. It's not as easy as just simply clapping the hands. But the home is there. The decision is hers: 20,000 new beds; \$1.2 billion worth of new money. Thirty-one people are crying out for attention and support and the right to stay in their home and the community that has served them so well and received them so well for almost 30 years.

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The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Wildman: I'm pleased to participate in this debate on the amendment to the amendment to Her Honour's speech. I want to concentrate on two matters that have been brought forward by previous speakers who have intervened in this debate.

A number of the members of the party supporting the government have indicated that the government is moving forward with care — that's the term they use — on their agenda to cut the deficit and to provide health care reinvestment and reinvestment in education. That I think has been, to summarize, the main thrust of the government's agenda as put forward by Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

The government hasn't, in making this argument, pointed out that they also are engaged in a significant transfer of wealth upwards in our society, that we are in fact redistributing wealth from the most vulnerable, the poorest in our society, to the most wealthy. This is a rather perverse approach compared to what most governments in democratic society since the 1930s have attempted to do when they have approached the question of redistribution of wealth. It's very unusual for governments.

Now it is in the same vein of the approach of ideological right-wing governments like the government of Mrs Thatcher in the United Kingdom and certainly the government of the Ronald Reagan administration in the United States of America. These are both jurisdictions where governments took the same approach, that is, "We must redistribute wealth, but not redistribute it among the people in greatest need but rather redistribute wealth upwards."

A few in the debate have indicated that yes, they are doing that. The government is doing that, but the government is doing it because the members of the government party believe that it will create a climate in which these

very well-to-do people who are receiving a significant benefit because of this redistribution of wealth will spend the money and this will somehow generate the jobs that this government hopes to create.

Of course that in terms of economic theory is quite backwards because obviously the people who do not need money to spend are least likely to spend it immediately. They may invest it in overseas investments. They may take holidays overseas. They may even purchase automobiles and so on, but the automobile might be a luxury automobile manufactured in Germany, for instance, or if it does generate a job, the only job in Ontario it generates is the salesman's job, I guess, in the dealership. It produces jobs in the manufacturing where it occurs in Germany or in some other part of Europe or Japan or elsewhere.

Obviously if you want to generate consumer confidence, and there's been a lot of discussion about that in this debate, the best thing to do is to give it to the people who are living from one paycheque to another. Those are the people who, if they have a little extra cash, will spend it immediately and they'll spend it locally, they'll spend it at retail establishments very close to where they live. It will benefit their community and their province and it will perhaps generate jobs.

The problem with the redistribution of wealth that this government is engaged in is that the top 6% of wage earners, those who make over 80% a year individually in this province, get 25% of this tax break. Obviously that's not going to produce the same kind of expenditures in the retail sector and otherwise that giving that 25% of the total dollars to the people at the bottom of the income level or even at the middle-income level would generate.

I've also heard in this debate a lot of discussion by members of the Conservative Party about the debt that we were going to bequeath to future generations and how this was most unfair and an improper approach. That's why we had to make all the cuts we've made, that this government has made in Ontario to try to lower the deficit and deal with the debt problem. But when you look at what has happened in education, particularly post-secondary education, I think it's interesting to look at this question of debt and what we're doing to future generations.

I will concede, as the Conservatives have said, that one of the major reasons for the significant increase in tuition fees at the post-secondary education level has been the callous cutting of transfer payments by the federal Liberal government that hurt the provinces and has hurt the students in Ontario and across Canada. That's quite true. But added to that, this government has cut \$400 million from post-secondary education in Ontario. On top of that, the government has said that they will increase tuition fees. I'm not as concerned about the increase in tuition fees as I am about the proposal to deregulate tuition fees; in other words, to allow higher institutions of learning to essentially charge what the market will bear for certain post-secondary education, usually post-graduate programs. This is very, very scary.

Right now, we have an enormous student debt. That's what has been the result of the cuts by the small-c conservative policies of Paul Martin at the federal level and the right-wing policies of Ernie Eves at the provincial level. The fact is that 10 years ago the average student graduated from university in Ontario with a debt of about \$7,000. Today the average debt for a graduate of a four-year program is about \$20,000 to \$25,000, somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$22,000. That's what the average debt is now.

When this government and the members of the Conservative Party talk about saving future generations from debt, they're foisting debt on the very generation they say they're supposedly going to be helping. What is their answer? Their answer is to deregulate tuition fees. That means that certain programs are going to cost enormous amounts. Now the theory is that —

Mr John L. Parker (York East): Which ones, Bud?

Mr Wildman: There are some programs like MBA programs, perhaps other professional programs. The theory is that these high-cost programs will somehow cross-subsidize less popular programs. Somehow by having very expensive \$20,000-a-year tuition for MBAs, you're going to be subsidizing anthropology or something. Frankly, it doesn't work at all. What it may do is pay for the MBA program, but it certainly doesn't assist less popular programs to lower tuition fees or even to control tuition fees in those other programs. It doesn't work.

The problem is that this means less access for those who need education and the ones who do get in — first off, a lot of them are experiencing what's called sticker shock because they're now seeing what the cost of the tuition is and they're saying: "No, I can't afford it. I can't handle that kind of debt." These again are the people whom this government says they are saving from debt.

The government now is proposing income-contingent plans to pay back. This is their answer. They want to negotiate this with the federal government. Up to now the provincial government hasn't been able to negotiate any such agreement and the banks, the lending institutions have said, "Look, we're not interested." Why? Because the banks have said the student debt is already too high. It's not a good idea to increase that debt any further and they're not interested in carrying that debt and having the carrying charges over a longer period of time than an income-contingent plan would entail.

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What is projected? If the trend continues with the deregulation of tuition fees and the higher tuition fees that entails and the income-contingent plan, which means more debt over a longer period of time for students, that average of \$22,000 or \$25,000 in debt for a graduate today in the next 10 to 20 years is projected to increase to \$60,000 or \$65,000. Some have even predicted as high as \$80,000.

What that means is that many, many young people, the generation that these Tories say they're saving from debt, will be starting off in life with a mortgage but no house. What this government is doing is mortgaging the future of the students who are currently attending university and the

students who will be attending university and college in the next 10 to 20 years. This from a government that says it wants to save people from debt. It's insidious.

The government has taken other measures, of course, that hurt students and make it very unlikely that they're going to be able to provide for themselves, be productive and contribute to society.

While they've ensured that those who are not wealthy don't have access or if they do, they have enormous debt, at the post-secondary level, at the secondary school level this government has cut in half the funding for adult education. That means that in this city alone 8,000 adult students will not have a place. They can go to continuing education, which is the answer the government has, but there aren't enough places. There is no day program for most of those students, and so these students who have had the courage to go back to school to upgrade their skills, to finish their secondary school education so that they can get into the work world or go on to post-secondary education if they can afford it, are being locked in the welfare system. Again, from a government that says it is trying to save these people from future debt.

At the other end of the system, of course, the government has limited expenditures at both the secondary and elementary levels for all students. We look at the new funding formula that has produced the following results.

After the first year boards in this province with rising enrolments will be unable to keep pace with the rising costs due to the cap on education spending in the funding formula. The total amount to be spent on education is frozen, even though enrolment in Ontario is increasing by 25,000 students each year. So that means a cut, and the government says it's stable funding.

Funding for core French programs from junior kindergarten to grade 3 has been eliminated under the funding formula. Grants designated to keep class size in grades 1 and 2 capped at 20 students have been eliminated, even though we know that lower class sizes at the primary level are essential. This is an estimated loss of \$150 million annually.

The government has removed the mandate for junior kindergarten and made it optional, while at the same time cutting the funding for junior kindergarten so that many boards will not continue the junior kindergarten program and certainly those that don't have it will be very unlikely to begin a new junior kindergarten program, despite the fact that the ministers across the way — I'm sure the Minister of Community and Social Services knows that investment at the preschool level saves a great deal of money later.

All this government has in the throne speech is a commitment to a study by the eminent expert Dr Fraser Mustard, who will I'm sure be able to take off the shelf many of the studies he's already done and give to the government the evidence that he has already published about the value of early childhood education.

Beginning in 1999 senior kindergarten will be funded on a half-day program only. Full day programs will be

eliminated. Again, from a government that says it's interested in early childhood education.

Secondary school funding only covers — this is very odd — 7.2 credits per year in secondary schools, which over a four-year program works out to 28.8 credits, and yet the curriculum that has been published by this government says that students are required to have 30 credits. How does this work? It must be new math, I guess.

In essence, this is a government that claims that it is going to make changes, that it has already made changes that will benefit future generations. They make a great point of saying that this government does not want to mortgage the future of our young people in this province, yet at the post-secondary level they are imposing enormous debt loads on those students who do go to post-secondary education. They are cutting access for those who can't afford those kinds of debt loads and making it more difficult for many students to attend post-secondary education programs. At the elementary and secondary levels they are cutting the very basics that are required to ensure that students have the kind of skills and knowledge that they need to be able to compete in the information age going into the 21st century. This is counterproductive. It doesn't make sense to say that in order to prevent future generations from having to shoulder an enormous debt we must cut them so badly now that we create a social deficit from which they will not be able to recover.

This government is creating an enormous deficit. It is creating debt for post-secondary students and it is creating a social deficit that is going to harm our students, harm our young people, harm our society. Every time this government cuts education at the elementary and secondary level, this means that many students will not be able to achieve their full potential and we will end up having to pay for that later.

Every time this government cuts the incomes of the people at the very bottom, the poorest and most vulnerable, and hurts their ability to provide adequate nutrition and housing, that creates a social deficit for which we will be paying later. It doesn't make sense. This government is a government that purports to govern on the basis of common sense and yet, because of its commitment to transfer wealth upwards, to redistribute wealth to those people who do not need assistance by taking it away from those who do and from the services that they require in order to be productive and provide for themselves and contribute to society, they are creating a serious social deficit that will cost us all. It will cost Ontario and it is something that we will be paying for many generations.

Somehow this government has to recognize that what they are proposing and what they are doing, the agenda on which they have embarked, no matter how they try to make it look as if they are caring, is based on a basic contradiction. You don't care for people by taking away their chance for education, you don't care for people by foisting debt upon them, you don't care for people by taking away their ability to feed themselves nutritionally. This is not tough love, it's just tough. You're hurting our

society. You're creating a social deficit that is going to cost us all for many generations to come.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I want to thank the member across for his comments. He makes a few comments, especially with regard to post-secondary education and increases that the government has not foisted upon universities, not forced upon universities, but the government only says to universities and colleges that they are allowed to make increases in tuition.

I might say off the top that I've been opposed to this in our government. I've written editorials about it and I've spoken to the minister about it. I don't believe we should be allowing increases in tuition by the colleges and universities at least until the Provincial Auditor is allowed to do value-for-money audits of these institutions. Currently, he's not allowed to do that. I have a private member's bill which I hope to reintroduce that will allow the Provincial Auditor into those institutions so we can get a little better handle on exactly how they're spending their money before students have to continually face tuition increases.

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That being said, it should be pointed out to everyone who may be listening at home that the NDP themselves at least three times allowed tuition fee increases of 10% each year. The NDP did that and they did not make any concessions like we have for poor students. We have said that any time an institution wants to increase tuition fees, it must set aside 10% of those new revenues for grants for poor students. That's something we did that the NDP did not even consider doing.

Also, these tuition fees for colleges and universities going up is directly attributable to the policies of the two governments opposite, which racked up debts year after year. We now spend \$9 billion-plus a year on interest payments. If we didn't spend money on interest, we could spend it —

The Acting Speaker: Thanks, member for Niagara Falls.

Mr David Caplan (Orillia): I'd like to thank the member for Algoma for his comments. I'll address my comments to the last speaker, for Niagara Falls, because I heard a lot of nonsense in the speaker's comments. You see, it is a national embarrassment that Ontario ranks 10th out of 10, dead last, in support for universities per capita in Canada. In fact Ontario has the second-highest amount of tuition, after Nova Scotia, that we place as a burden on students.

This notion he suggests, that if universities and colleges decide they're going to raise tuitions they've got to give some to the students, is just a tax on students. What happens is students pay the fare and then they give it to the other students, where the government has reduced its share 15.5% over the last two years. In fact, when the Council of Ontario Universities came to do pre-budget consultations, they showed very clearly that 48 of 50 states in the United States actually increased their investment in post-secondary education. The two exceptions were Hawaii

and Alaska, but all the rest had an average increase of 10%. What does Ontario do? Ontario decreases its share and its support for post-secondary education.

Both members have referred to OSAP. This government has rewritten the rules to make it more difficult for students to get assistance. In fact they're placing a larger burden on students and their families to fund their own education. If that is not downloading, I don't know what is. This government has its priorities wrong. They should be taking their responsibilities very seriously.

Mr Marchese: I'm going to support the member for Algoma with his focus on education, post-secondary and elementary, and would briefly say to the member for Niagara Falls that he and his government, through Mike Harris, is wrapping up the biggest deficit that we have ever seen. His \$5-billion giveaway, to the minister who's yapping there, to the wealthiest Ontarians is not only economically stupid but immoral, I argue. He should know that; they should know that. But it's not directed to him, it's directed to the people listening to this program.

That money is not going to the middle class or to the working poor. It's going to wealthy Ontarians, the people these folks here support. These people here, these Tories, are supporting and promoting a 1990 model of social Darwinism. That's what these people are promoting, under the guise of everybody being equal and providing equal opportunities to all. Everybody knows we don't all have the same opportunities and the same equality in this society. Everyone knows that if you're a millionaire, you're more equal than the little guy who's only got a couple of thousand dollars in the bank. Everyone knows that.

When the member for Algoma says we are increasing the burden for university students, he's dead right. That burden is being placed on middle-class parents and middle-class students. My daughter, first-year university, quit in second year because she could not afford to make the payments. I paid the first year but could not afford the second year.

We have thousands of middle-class students who cannot afford those tuition fees. M. Maves from Niagara Falls says it's okay if we do that, that we're not forcing the universities to raise tuition fees, we're allowing them to do it. It's the same thing.

Mr Newman: It's always nice to follow the member who speaks for Bay Street here in the House.

The member for Algoma spoke about tuition and student debts being \$40,000 in some cases. From the math that I did here, tuition is \$3,600 a year and it's four years of university. Four times \$3,600 is \$14,400.

Mr Wildman: I said \$20,000, and you include their living expenses.

Mr Newman: Oh, \$20,000. Okay, sorry. Then not all of the debt load is tuition. Some of it is housing and living costs. You have people who have racked up debts of \$40,000 and have chosen to be in school for eight years and have done a couple of undergraduate degrees and may have chosen not to work. I think there are lots of opportunities in this province today to get a part-time job

to help yourself through university. That's what I chose to do.

Speaking of jobs in this province, 325,000 more jobs have been created in this province since June 1995, when we took office. We cut taxes 30 times to create those 325,000 jobs. If we look back at the legacy of the NDP government from 1990 to 1995, they actually increased taxes 32 times, some of them retroactively, I might add, taking money right out of the pockets of hardworking Ontarians. Their 32 tax increases actually led to a decrease of 10,000 working in this province, a loss of 10,000 jobs.

What we've seen here today is that tax cuts equal jobs, 325,000 more people working in the province of Ontario versus a plan where you hike taxes and drive jobs and investment away from the province.

The Acting Speaker: Further comments or questions? The member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: I found that a very interesting speech. I appreciate the fact that you have provided for —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: I'm sorry to interrupt, but I'm told that I miscounted and that you're the fifth, and I can't allow that. But thanks very much for offering to do that, anyway.

The Chair recognizes the member for Algoma with two minutes to respond.

Mr Wildman: I regret very much that my friend from St Catharines didn't have the opportunity to comment, but I'm sure he will find some time to speak during this debate. I want to thank the members who have commented and made suggestions to me about my intervention.

The member for Scarborough Centre mistakenly said that I had indicated the debt was at \$40,000. I didn't; I said the projections are that it will rise, but right now it's about \$20,000. The income-contingent plan means more debt over a longer period of time, and it could mean as much as \$60,000 or \$65,000 over the next 20 years.

The member for Niagara Falls said that the government was not forcing universities and colleges to raise tuition fees; it was just allowing them to. At the time you allow them to and then cut their funding, you're indeed forcing them to.

Interjection.

Mr Wildman: You did; you cut the funding at the post-secondary level by \$400 million.

Mr Maves: We didn't do it last year.

Mr Wildman: The first year you were in power you did. The government also deregulated the tuition fees so students will have to pay more. Poorer students do not have access, and those students who are helped by universities are essentially being subsidized by the other students.

I appreciate the comments of the member for Oriole. He's quite right that Ontario is last in funding for universities and second-highest in tuition fees and OSAP has been cut to the point that people on social assistance can't even get it any more.

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The member for Fort York was quite right about what we're doing in this province. This is a government that purports to help people but essentially believes that the people who are poor have too much money and the people who are rich don't have enough. That is the reason they are giving the people who are rich and wealthy more money and cutting the incomes of the people at the bottom. They are redistributing wealth upward and creating a deficit for which we'll all pay.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr William Saunderson (Eglinton): I am very pleased to rise in the House tonight to speak in response to the throne speech. As well as representing the constituency of Eglinton and the constituents thereof, I consider the business community to be one of my special constituencies. It is because of my background that I feel that way. I have dealt and continue to deal with the business community.

Through my business experience, and as previous Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, and now as the chairman of the Ontario International Trade Corp, I had the opportunity to meet with businesses and sector groups to discuss various trade opportunities as well and I have travelled with businesses on trade missions to all parts of the world. The conclusions I have reached after listening to the people I've had the chance to meet with support what we have heard in the speech from the throne last week.

I heard that a strong economy is key to creating new jobs. I also heard that the province must become a welcoming haven for new investment if we're to proceed sensibly. I also heard that the province must create a climate that is attractive to our brightest and our best minds to keep them here in Ontario. That is essential for our development. Also, I have heard that high-quality social services for the people of Ontario attract investments to this province. I think one of the most important things I have heard is that we must provide the opportunities for our children, and by that I mean a quality education that's going to produce a job opportunity for them in the long run.

Businesses of all sizes have told me that they want no surprises in government. They do not want an employer health tax somewhere in the middle of their economic planning, which happened back in the late 1980s.

They want the example of a balanced budget to send a message out to various businesses that we are a very sensible business climate. They also want us to keep on trying to eliminate our deficit because ultimately that has a big effect on our income taxes.

They also want, and have told me, that the government should step aside sensibly and let businesses operate in a proper manner. Also, they want us to produce sensible and competitive tax rates. They want our utility rates to be competitive. They want our workers' compensation rates to be reasonable. They want our minimum wage to be competitive.

The merit system should decide who gets the various jobs and the various promotions.

There should be a proper balance between management and labour, and that's what we did back in 1995 after being elected.

They want to have a skilled labour force so that they can count on people to do the jobs properly when they locate here. I'm happy to say that 56% of our labour force has some college or university training, which is a very high rate.

They want a stable labour force with low turnover. Ours is 5% in Ontario, and that's very good. They want low absenteeism. Ours is 4% in the province, again a very good statistic. They want long tenure on jobs. The average tenure in Ontario is nine years.

They want fewer work stoppages than have occurred in the past, and I am pleased to say that it is less than one tenth of 1% now. They want labour rates that are competitive with other jurisdictions. They want a health care system that is effective and less costly than other jurisdictions.

I am pleased to note that the OHIP cost for companies is about \$600 to \$700 per person, where in the United States the cost to a company with a health plan is about six times that, or \$4,200. It's a big advantage for Ontario.

They want an environment for research and development that is competitive with the rest of the world. I think we have the best R&D tax credit system in the world.

They want a well-maintained and fully integrated infrastructure for travel, shipping and telecommunications. Things in this area have improved dramatically since our election in 1995. They want a strong working relationship among colleges, universities, business and government, and that really means the centres of excellence which our government has made a big commitment to for the next five years.

I would like to cite the job creation facts that have been spoken about many times over the last week. Since July 1995 there have been almost 350,000 net new jobs created. I am adding the April statistics to what the previous speaker mentioned. You might be interested to know that 336,000 of these jobs were created by the private sector, which says a lot for the encouragement we've given the private sector.

From February 1997 to February 1998, 265,000 net new jobs were created in the private sector. Average annual employment for 1997 was 102,000 people higher than the average annual employment rate in 1996. These are all good statistics. It means we are doing the right things.

Also, in my capacity as the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, and now as chairman of the Ontario International Trade Corp, I have had the opportunity and still have the opportunity to open or announce or be involved in the announcement of a new plant opening probably every month in this province. Of course there are many more, but those are all I can be involved in.

All this shows that the government is indeed listening. For the budget will be balanced, we know, by the year 2000. Who knows? It might be even sooner.

Mr Bradley: It could be earlier.

Mr Saunderson: It might be. Personal tax cuts have been achieved and they will be cut even further. By the end of 1999, we will have the lowest personal tax rates in Canada. I am told that Alberta is jealous and might try to lower theirs. Wouldn't that be nice, to have governments competing to have the lower rates rather than the higher rates?

Also, the employer health tax is being eliminated for over 80% of Ontario companies and that is a tremendous saving for the average small- and medium-sized company of somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$10,000 or more per year.

Our labour law changes have improved our competitive positions, as I mentioned earlier, and I think our indicated future actions in this area will help construction for the petrochemical industry, which is basically located in Sarnia. In other words, what we're providing is a predictable and sensible government, and this type of government indeed sends the right messages out to business.

I have just been involved with the export marketing task force that will soon make its report. It has just concluded its deliberations. It gave me a chance to meet with leading Ontario exporters. I am happy to tell you that Ontario has a strong exporting economy. Exports account for 43% of Ontario's gross domestic product. It is a higher proportion than in any other G-7 country or jurisdiction. Even though Ontario's exports have grown more rapidly than GDP over the past decade, there is a significant opportunity for Ontario to grow its export base.

Some suggestions I heard from that task force are very interesting. I heard that we should try as a government to enhance Ontario's business climate and encourage foreign investment; that we should build a more pervasive global export mindset; that we should improve and expand science and education, for after all, the science and technology area is the future for our young people; that we should create and maintain research centres of excellence and we should have corporate tax rates which are competitive with those of neighbouring US states. We should reduce the regulatory and bureaucratic barriers to conducting business efficiently and we should continue to reduce income rates in general.

These suggestions give additional support to what our government has done and will do as a result of the throne speech. These suggestions came from approximately 30% of the Ontario business leaders of small and medium-sized enterprises. Without any reference to what we had done, this was their original work.

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I'd like to speak for a moment about early childhood education. Research tells us that the early years are key to development in languages and in sciences. Dr Fraser Mustard is a renowned expert in this field, and I have known Fraser Mustard since my university days. I admire him and I agree with him 100%. I might say that when I

was meeting with my caucus at our retreat in Collingwood, I stressed the work of Fraser Mustard. The study that he and Margaret McCain will undertake in the next little while will give us some input in how best — and I want to say this. We know what he's done and there's a lot on the shelf and we appreciate that, but what he's going to do is to tell us how best to prepare young and preschool children for a lifetime of education; in other words, to sow the seeds of desire to learn more and more and develop as the economy and science develop over the next few years. I look forward to the recommendations along these lines that will come forward.

As I watch my own grandchildren — and I'd like to name them: Madeleine, Jacob, Nathan, Nicole, Dylan, Max and Cole — I never cease to be amazed at their ability to absorb information and at their very young ages to know the ways of computers and to sign on and work with computers. It's impressive, and if we learn more about the learning process and continually reassess how to best prepare our children for the future, then we will be doing them a great service.

Mr Bradley: I hope you haven't given them the Common Sense Revolution to read.

Mr Saunderson: Some of them have gotten through the first page already and the last page, and that's really all you need.

We have to have more emphasis on science and math in our elementary and secondary schools, because if we have this emphasis, we are going to help our young people prepare for high-technology jobs. I was very glad to see some reference made to this subject in the speech from the throne and I'm particularly happy with the education minister's approach to only not more science and math in the school system but also in junior kindergarten, which I think is essential, where it's possible.

Mr Wildman: That's a heavy point there.

Mr Saunderson: But it is a very important point.

I would also like to talk a little bit about our centres of excellence, which I referred to earlier. Centres of excellence give us a chance as a government to work with the business community and the academic community. As you know, there are now three centres of excellence in the province, with more likely to be created, but this has helped Ontario establish a reputation in the rest of the world in science and technology.

In that connection, I would like to congratulate Canadian astronaut David Williams, who has spend a great deal of his life in Ontario. I had the chance to meet with the entire crew of the Columbia space mission last summer when they were training at York University for their flight on the neurolab mission which is now in process. Mr Speaker, I don't know if you've had the opportunity to see the television coverage of the space shuttle, but if you have a chance, you will see a space lab which is fully equipped with an international space laboratory and partly through our centres of excellence that machine has been equipped. Indeed, Ontario has contributed to the work being done in space and I think we should all feel very proud of that.

I'd also like to touch on the Toronto Olympic bid, which will not only mean special attention to Toronto but also to Ontario, to Jim Bradley's constituency over near St Catharines in the rowing course, but it'll also help Canada as well. There will be a great deal of infrastructure made for that project. What that means is that there will be many facilities left over for our athletes to use long after the Olympics have come and gone. It's an opportunity to show Ontario to the world, and particularly Toronto, both as a tourist destination and as an investment opportunity. The athletes will not only benefit from these facilities, but so will the people, because many uses can be made of these facilities that will be left behind.

Speaking as the father of an Olympic competitor, my son Brian, once we get the Olympics to Ontario in 2008, I think we will recognize a great pride of accomplishment in our youth and in our businesses and in fact in all of our people.

Ontario is in the midst of one of its strongest economic growth periods ever. We're leading the Canadian economy and outperforming other G-7 nations. Right now we are growing at a rate of approximately 4% of GDP, which is a very high rate for a developed country.

If we're going to keep Ontario's economy growing, we must continue to expand our trade. As I mentioned, we have recently had a task force on foreign trade. If the recommendations that I think will be made come to pass, we will certainly expand our trade and we will have much more than the 2% of the world's imports that we presently have.

It's interesting to note that if you take away the United States from our exports, we really only have 0.23% of the world's imports. We can, and we must, do much better. If we do, we will create much more economic activity, we will create more jobs, we will get more people working and our young people will have the jobs they so richly deserve. But as I say, we must look beyond our major trading partner, the United States. We have to look to the Far East, to Europe, and to South America particularly.

A year ago, I had the opportunity of taking 15 companies, two colleges and one university to South America. We visited Chile, Argentina and Brazil. We came back with some \$77 million worth of orders — not bad for a small trip — but it did open up our eyes to the fact that there was much to be done in our trade with South America. As you know, we are about to have a free trade agreement between Canada and Chile, and I hope that will be expanded to include the countries that belong to the Mercosur agreement.

I found also on that trip that what we really needed to do was to come back to Ontario and host a trade event which would give the people who want to trade with South America a chance to come and hear from those companies that went, and that were very successful, how easy it is to do business. So we did hold the Tradewinds forum in early December of this year. We attracted some 250 companies that came as a prelude to the Team Canada mission that went to South America in January, led by the Prime Minister and all the premiers of the provinces of this

country. That showed to me what we can do to promote external trade. We're going to do more trips, then come back and report and then have a forum so that people can go off and do it sensibly in other parts of the world.

We have to encourage an understanding of the global economy through our education system. I believe that unless we educate our students to the benefits of foreign trade, they will grow up the poorer for it. So I'm glad to see that there is a change in our curriculum, for the high schools particularly. I also think our universities and particularly our business schools should add more courses concerning internationalism and external trade.

We should be proud of Ontario. We are a province that is blessed by geography and with excellent people. I am proud to be part of a government that is producing a business climate which I think is going to realize the potential for Ontario. In short, this government that we're talking about today in the speech from the throne is committed to making Ontario the best place to live, to work and to raise a family. Thank you, Mr Speaker, for your kind attention.

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The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Bradley: I want to thank the member for Eglinton for his contribution to the House. He and I get along very well even though we have different points of view on a number of issues. It is very nice as well that his wife, Meredith, is in the gallery here this evening to watch him perform. She is joining so many in the gallery this evening who are watching, who came in for Bill's speech.

What I liked about his approach was his upfront honesty on issues. I used to ask him questions about gas prices. There were people on the government side who would make up these answers. I'm told that happens from time to time, that ministers don't always answer as accurately as we would like, don't always stick as close to the truth as we would like to see it happen. He was a minister at the time and I asked him the question about gas prices. He was honest enough to say, "Look, this government isn't in the business of regulating gas prices," which was the honest answer.

But then I heard the Premier barking, and I don't mean that in a derogatory way at all. The Premier was barking up in North Bay about this again. He was going to do something about this if the gas prices went up again. Of course the real answer was that the Premier would huff and puff and make a lot of noise and one of the newspapers in Toronto would say that he was really going to take on the gas companies. But the man who gave the honest answer — "We're not in the business of regulating gas prices" — was Bill Saunderson.

I like that approach. Even if I don't agree with it and I would like intervention, I like that approach. I want to compliment him on a very nice speech this evening.

Mr Marchese: The member for Eglinton has covered a lot of ground tonight. I want to limit myself to three areas he has talked about.

First is the early childhood education. I would agree with him, obviously, that early childhood education is a

critical part of the continuum of an educational system that benefits all of society. It does benefit young people, particularly those young people who come from uneven conditions in the home where the inequality of income is great. We have no disagreement with that and we're happy you raised it in the caucus. The only problem is that we should be acting on it.

I remember Dave Johnson saying, when he wanted to do the amalgamation: "We've got piles of studies over here. It's time to act." You remember Dave would bring his piles of studies? There are piles of study on the benefits of early childhood education across the world. France is one of those countries that does it effectively. We don't need more studies. We need an action plan and we need it today.

On the other matter you raised, in terms of including courses on globalization, I agree with that. You know what they should talk about there, member for Eglinton? They should talk about the fact that the transnational economy is destroying the middle class everywhere in the world, creating an entrenched underclass in every country. The top third of the world are getting richer, the bottom third more desperate and the middle third are falling steadily downward. I agree we should talk about that global economy and what it's doing to countries and individuals.

On the issue of tax breaks, a study conducted by the government's technical committee on business taxation concludes: "There appears to be no evidence or linkage between the general level of taxes in an economy and the level of unemployment." I'll get into that as soon as I have an opportunity to speak tonight.

Mr Maves: I'd like to take the opportunity to really tell the public about how important the member for Eglinton has been to Ontario for the past two and a half years and to our government. He's given this government a great deal of very quiet but effective leadership.

He can be held responsible for much of the economic boom that's occurring in Ontario right now — 342,000 jobs since this government took office. For a lot of that you have to look towards this member who was the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism in the first few years of this government.

Some of his accomplishments were developing a marketing program to sell Ontario not only as a travel and tourism destination but, more importantly, as a place to invest. Through his stewardship he has instilled confidence in businesses all over the world and especially in Ontario. Through that fiscal responsibility through the tax cuts this government has brought in, that's given confidence to the business community and they're now investing in Ontario in huge numbers.

I want to thank this member for his support for the 1999 World Rowing Championships in St Catharines, seeing his way clear to making sure that over \$1 million, I believe, has come from this government to St Catharines to fix that course. I know the member for St Catharines-Brock, Mr Froese, worked extremely hard lobbying the

member for Eglinton to get that money, and they both deserved to be credited.

I think it was important that someone stood and let the public know and relayed to the House the very strong leadership that this member for Eglinton has given this government in its first two and a half years and that I hope he will continue to impart.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I'm delighted to be able to comment on the fine presentation of the member for Eglinton.

First off, I want to congratulate my colleague the member for St Catharines for lobbying the minister of the time over that rowing course. I'm sure that was just an inadvertent mistake by the member for Niagara Falls.

One of the things I was particularly intrigued with as I listened carefully to the speech was the comments regarding early childhood education. I think the member would also understand that continuing education is of paramount importance in the province of Ontario. I know the member will be particularly interested in this letter I have from the physicians in Elliot Lake.

The physicians at the Elliot Lake clinic are writing, most upset that the continuing medical education program for rural physicians — for them — is being cut by 75%. I want you to listen to this for just one moment because I'm sure you will take this to your colleagues.

"Elliot Lake is a community of approximately 14,000. Secondary referral centres are in Sault Ste Marie and Sudbury, both about two hours away. For a community of its size, Elliot Lake is unique in medical coverage in that there are no internal medicine specialists or subspecialists covering a now senior population. The increased amount and complexity of care required by this population falls to a group of dedicated general practitioners and anaesthetists. To fulfil their responsibilities, they are required to maintain a skill set that sometimes exceeds those of their smaller town colleagues and definitely exceeds those of the GPs in the larger metropolitan areas. This can only be carried out by continuing medical education."

I say to the minister, we need to do this too.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Eglinton, if he would like two minutes to respond.

Mr Saunderson: Yes, I would like to respond. I'd like first of all to thank the various members whom I've got to know over almost three years. They are much younger than I am by far.

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): By far.

Mr Saunderson: By far, I can tell you. They are probably much wiser in the way of politics than I am.

I would like to say, though, particularly on an evening like this, it's a lot less combative than earlier in the day. I guess a lot of us have got to know each other a lot better during these periods. I count them as my friends — sometimes debaters against me or my party, but I consider them friends and I treasure that and always will.

On early childhood education, I think we are acting in a way that is going to produce a very educated population in the long run. I'm particularly pleased with the decision to continue to fund junior kindergarten if a school board

wishes to do that and is already doing that. I'm a great believer, as I said earlier, in early childhood education. It only takes having grandchildren to make you realize how important that is.

I also recall your comments about the middle class. I think a strong middle class is the backbone of any free enterprise society. I really believe that the way to get a strong middle class is to keep taxes reasonable for those people. I don't mind the people at the high end paying lots of tax or reasonably lots of tax, but I do think the middle class has to have spending income so that they can create the jobs and economic activity that's worthwhile.

To the member for Algoma-Manitoulin on continuing education, I guess I still feel the same way, but I think we could use our community colleges better. I think they're only occupied about 75% of the time. They could be more fully used.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to join the debate on the speech from the throne. Perhaps I'll begin by talking about the issue that the member for Eglinton talked about, and that is trade. I share with him the belief that Ontario's future depends on our ability to compete globally. It's of interest to me that five or six years ago actually about 85% of our exports went to the US, and obviously 15% to the rest of the world. If I'm not mistaken, the number now is 90% going to the US and 10% to the rest of the world. I applaud our growth of trade with the US but I do think, as I think the member for Eglinton was implying, that there's much to be done in developing our business in other countries apart from the US. That's to take nothing away from the need to aggressively develop our business in the US.

2000

I would comment that I was interested in going through this, I think, quite good document that perhaps the member himself was involved in preparing — Ontario: The Future is Right Here, Doing Business in the Global Economy. I thought it was quite a good document, actually. But I would just say that many of the points used to sell Ontario are things that have to do with the quality of life here in Ontario.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): Absolutely.

Mr Chudleigh: Why not?

Mr Phillips: Why not? I agree with that. That's a good idea. But we have to understand what makes up that quality of life.

Mr Froese: You're right.

Mr Phillips: The members have attacked our education system. The Premier himself said it was broken. Here in the document: "The education and skill attainment level of Ontario's labour force is one of our greatest strengths." Share of workforce with some post-secondary education: You can see Ontario ranking way up there. Increase in share of manufacturing workforce with some post-secondary education: Ontario ranks way up there.

It goes on to say: "Ontario is the preferred location for those who value quality of life. In 1994 Canada ranked first in the United Nations development.... Ontario's prime

rate is dramatically lower than comparable North American areas."

It talks about the crime rate being low, about our education levels being high, about our enormous advantages in health care costs for our manufacturing sector.

"Ontario's labour force is a highly productive and cost-competitive labour force."

I go through all of that because I think we run the risk of tampering with some of the things that have made Ontario fundamentally successful. We talked earlier today about tuition fees going up dramatically for young people. I don't think it's any accident that we have a high level of post-secondary enrolment, and one of the reasons is that it has been affordable for young people to enrol in post-secondary school.

We have a comparatively low crime rate. I don't want anybody to misinterpret it and say that the crime rate is satisfactory. It should and must be lower. But I think we have to look at the reasons why we have substantially lower rates. The document you put out here shows the homicide rate. This is Toronto here and other major US cities here.

The reason I go through all of that is that the Premier has implied in many respects that Ontario has been broken, it needs a revolution to fundamentally change it. You have had the revolution and we've experienced it. But I would just say, let's recognize that the strengths of Canada, the strengths of Ontario have been, in many respects, the quality of life — the quality of life for less fortunate people in terms of a system to help them on social assistance, access to post-secondary learning that's available to everyone. Certainly when I was growing up it was never a thought that I could not afford to go to university. In Ontario it was always possible, regardless of your income.

Moving on to two or three other issues that I don't think have been discussed a lot here in the Legislature, let me talk a little bit about education for moment. I have some significant concerns in some areas that we haven't talked about. One is in the area of how we are going to provide new pupil places in Ontario for our growing enrolment. We talked earlier today about enrolment growing by roughly 25,000 students a year.

The government has chosen to move to a new way of funding new schools. Essentially the government is going to have school boards lease schools, get the private sector to build a school and the school boards will lease them. I personally do not have a problem with leasing accommodation. Governments have done that in office buildings and all those sorts of things. I don't have a problem with that. Where I do have a problem is that in my opinion it's an accounting trick to understate the expenditures.

Every year for a long, long while, because of the enrolment growth, the province has spent roughly \$400 million on new schools. When you move to leasing, you can dramatically cut that cost because you're not funding the cost of the new school, you're simply going to get someone else to finance it and you will lease it. The government now has put in place this new leasing formula and

they've allocated roughly \$90 million a year for the next few years. In my opinion, that's a debt trap. The cumulative lease costs will come home to haunt us. It's a device used by many governments.

I have a report here from the Nova Scotia government. They moved to leasing schools several years ago and the auditor pointed out — perhaps I could read his comments. Hopefully I can find it quickly. He suggested, "Governments want to lease schools because annual rental payments cause less short-term damage to the public balance sheet than major building projects."

Governments of all political stripes fall into this trap, as they get closer to an election, of starting to figure a way to make the books look a little bit better. I think this leasing one is an example where we are potentially heading into a debt trap.

By the way, if you haven't already heard from your municipalities, this is starting to have a significant impact in municipalities. I attended what's called the GTA mayors' meetings an important body that meets monthly to talk about GTA-wide issues. The first item on the agenda was a major issue dealing with this from Ajax, where the council has found that a developer is planning to build two high schools, move them out of the neighbourhood, put them in an industrial area, against the wishes of the council, and has gone now to the OMB to get approval for it. I would just say that all of us should challenge the finance minister and the education minister to look at the long-term implications of this, because I think it's going to be a debt trap.

Within education, by the way, I would also say that the province now has 100% responsibility for education. It sets every school boards' budget, down to the last penny. It sets the educational property tax rates. No one else does it. Actually, the cabinet sets it. Nobody can debate it. None of us approves it. It's set by them.

In my opinion, this budget should be showing the \$6.1 billion of educational property tax revenue. It should be shown as part of the provincial books and the offsetting expenditure. That may be an issue only for myself and the financial community, but it's significant. You will find now the province has to put in \$300 million a year to cover the debt servicing costs of school boards or the interest that school boards are paying on the debt. The Provincial Auditor has yet to comment on it. As I say, it's an issue perhaps of importance only initially to the financial community, but that's something we should be looking for in the budget. The third-largest source of revenue now for the province of Ontario, after personal income tax and sales tax, is property tax — the third-largest source of income — and it's never shown on the books, even though the province now sets that property tax rate. I think the businesses now know that 60% of their property taxes are set by the province and go to paying for education.

2010

I wanted to talk about another issue in the speech from the throne, and that is health care. I remember very well the first major statement by the new government was the

1995 fiscal and economic statement. In that fiscal and economic statement the government made a major decision on spending. That's when, if you remember, the government announced it was going to cut funding for hospitals. It said — this is from 1995 — "Transfers to hospitals currently total \$7.3 billion. They will be reduced by \$365 million in 1996-97, by an additional \$435 million in 1997-98 and a further \$505 million in 1998-99."

I remember very clearly that this was the first major announcement on health care, and it was to cut funding for hospitals. Many people, those of us in opposition, said: "Listen, you're making a mistake here. You are cutting the heart out of hospitals and there's no evidence that you've got in place the community services." I would say if you read the speech from the throne, it finally was an acknowledgement —

Mr Bradley: Thirty-two hospitals closed.

Mr Phillips: Yes, 32 hospitals closed. There finally was an acknowledgement, in the speech from the throne, that this was a mistake.

By the way, just as an aside — I don't want to sound petty about this — someone said it's been a decade since long-term care beds were approved. That's not factually correct. I can remember they were approved in 1989 and 1990. The reason I remember is — this is the way politics works — Bob Rae came and snipped the ribbon to open them when they were completed. I sat in the back row and watched it enviously. It's just the way it all works; he arrived in the limo and was greeted by all the dignitaries.

Interjection.

Mr Phillips: That's the way it works, Bill, you're right.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Transportation): But you're not bitter.

Mr Phillips: I'm not bitter. I got over it.

The reason I raise it is that, I think if members looked at it objectively, it was a mistake to be cutting the hospital budgets in 1995 without any services in place. All of us in our hospitals have experienced tragedies, with hospitals unable to provide essential services. As I say, it was a mistake then; I think the government was told it was a mistake then, and the speech from the throne finally acknowledged it.

I wanted to talk briefly about something I've never talked about much publicly, and it has to do with one of the things early in the speech from the throne. That's to do with the Calgary framework for unity, I think is the term used. All of us have a strong interest in seeing a united Canada. One of the most moving experiences in my political life was at the time of the last referendum in Quebec. If you remember, there was a rally in Montreal and buses from around Ontario headed down there. As I say, it was one of the most memorable days in my life.

I arrived to get on the bus at the Scarborough city hall at about 5:30 in the morning, kind of a misty day in October or November — I'm not sure what month. I was amazed there was only one seat left on the bus. The bus was filled at 5:30 in the morning. I got on the front seat of the bus and there was an 84-year-old woman there who

had to order her 92-year-old husband not to come because he wasn't that well. But he wanted to come.

Away we went. All along the highway were people who couldn't go, waving flags. This was at 5:30 in the morning. We made our way into Montreal. It was a noon rally. I made my way towards the stage, and in front of me were two people who were blind. There was a huge crush there, and as the dignitaries were leaving the stage things got a little out of hand because they were trying to force an opening. The two people who were blind were being jostled around, so I gave them a little bit of a hand. I simply assumed they were with somebody and were from Montreal. I said to them, "Where are you from?" They said, "We're from Toronto." I said, "Are you with somebody?" "No." They were totally blind, all on their own and all they had was a piece of paper that said, "Where's the bus we're on?" It was Can-Ar 124, or something like that. I talked to them a little bit. They said they got up at, like, 4 o'clock in the morning, phoned a cab, got over and got on the bus.

For me, there are the 84-year-old woman who had to order her husband not to come and then the two people who were completely blind who made their way to Montreal. It just shows you the enormous commitment we all have to this country, and the lengths to which people are prepared to go. I think most of us felt, how can we help in this thing? We felt helpless. It was that event that allowed some people to express their commitment to Canada. To me, it was almost symbolic of the country that I believe in, the country that we all believe in. I appreciated the comment in the speech from the throne and I do hope we can play a helpful role in assisting to pull this country together once and for all.

Finally, just to close on the point that my colleague from Eglinton made on the Olympic bid, I'm a supporter of the Olympics. One of our sons and I got in a car at 8 o'clock one night, we drove all night to Atlanta, we found a motel room, we were able to secure — we had no tickets.

Mr Bradley: I hope you didn't buy from scalpers.

Mr Phillips: I was afraid you'd raise that. There were people who had extra tickets on the street who were prepared to sell them, and they weren't bargains.

Actually, we happened to be there the weekend of the Canadian rowing success, and we watched Donovan Bailey win the race — we were as far away from him as you could be, but we were there. It was an exciting event that I think could knit Toronto together. So I'm personally very supportive of it. I happen to think we could host the best Olympics ever.

One of the unique things about Toronto is our enormous diversity. I think every country would feel at home here because there are significant communities living here whose origins are literally from every country around the world. I'm speaking personally, and I know my leader has sent a letter of support for it. I would look forward to Toronto hosting the Olympics and I think it would be an enormous shot in the arm.

To conclude, clearly I have some significant differences of opinion with the government. In many respects I fundamentally disagree with much and I'm dedicated to our party putting forward the alternative to the government and letting the people make that decision. I don't dispute that all of us in this Legislature have a different view of what's best for Ontario, but we're all, in our hearts, trying to do what we think is best for Ontario. I appreciate the chance to provide some comments on the speech from the throne.

2020

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Marchese: The member for Scarborough-Agincourt has touched on many different areas. He talked on issues of health and education as well as some other financial matters, and national unity issues as well. I want to limit myself briefly on those remarks, to agree in the areas of health care spending or lack of it or the approach this government has used that would have differed, obviously, from ours.

You have made the decision to cut funds from hospitals, which created a severe shortage of nurses, whom you fired, a severe shortage of care that should be properly in the community as you push people out of hospitals to save money. Long-term care has obviously been suffering and will continue to suffer for a long time because the needs are there and will continue to grow without those services.

I go back to the previous point about M. Ernie Eves saying last year in his budget that they were going to spend "\$2.7 billion of investments in restructuring our community-based health care system." He said, "We continue with that promise to reinvest." You invested nothing in that area in spite of the promise that fellow made.

This present minister says now, "We are going to invest \$1.2 billion over eight years." M. Eves had promised \$2.7 in five. Presumably we're talking about the same money. We're playing with the same money, except the minister now has found a lot less than Mr Eves had found that he didn't spend. So now we're dealing with \$1.2 billion over eight years. None of that spending will happen until the year 2000 or take effect until the year 2000, and who knows whether the commitment of that money will remain in years to come? We are worried about the promises this government has made and is not keeping.

Mr Caplan: I would like to congratulate my colleague the member for Scarborough-Agincourt for an excellent presentation. I will touch on two areas that he spoke about.

The first was in the matter of property taxation. I would really encourage members of the government to pay very close attention to his very wise counsel. I don't want to embarrass him, but Gerry Phillips has pointed out numerous times where the government should have been listening because of the chaos they were going to be causing with their property tax manoeuvres and what that was going to cause. We saw the results of that over this past winter and spring. Had they taken the time to listen to

the member, it's possible that transition and those changes would have gone much more smoothly. As it is, the solution the finance minister has come up with is one to merely delay the problem instead of looking at it as a comprehensive package. I hope the government would heed the words of the member for Scarborough-Agincourt because he makes a great deal of sense.

The other is in health care. In health care the government has chosen the wrong direction in closing hospitals like North York Branson Hospital in my area. There were some really interesting problems. Because North York Branson faced closure prematurely, they could not generate a critical mass of staff — that's doctors, nurses, cleaners, all of the support staff — to be able to maintain that hospital, because of the chaos this government has caused.

It comes down to one thing: They just don't listen when these problems are highlighted. I hope that will change, but I don't think it will.

Mr Bradley: I want to compliment the member for Scarborough-Agincourt for his usual smooth presentation this evening: smooth in that it has a lot of content in it, it flows well and it's very logical.

I always appreciate that he puts out this document called Treasury Watch every once in a while. I try to get an advance copy slipped under the door in a brown envelope, because it shows up the next day and it's available for all to see. It provides some excellent insight into what's really going on in terms of Ontario finances.

I wanted to ask the member for Scarborough-Agincourt what effect he thought the booming economy in the United States was having on the Ontario economy. I can recall the period from 1985 to 1990 when we had a booming economy in Ontario and I was part of a government that wanted to claim what some said was more credit than we should for the booming economy at the time. I wonder if there's a parallel there today in that we have a situation where when the US economy, particularly the northern US economy, is booming, our economy tends to boom as well.

I also want to add my comments to his about early childhood education. If I've mentioned Fraser Mustard's name, I've mentioned it 25 times in this House. I didn't know that we were going to have another retainer for Dr Mustard for yet another study, because the excellent studies he has already produced and the presentations he has made point clearly to the fact that early childhood education is extremely important and not some frill that the back-to-the-1950s brain trust in the government seems to think it is.

I want to compliment the member on his excellent speech.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I'd like to compliment the member for Scarborough-Agincourt. I know he's going to be a little surprised that I'd be complimentary and supportive of his comments, but I was particularly taken by his comments about his trip to Montreal and Canadian unity and how impressed he was with that whole activity, the people who went with him

who were blind and just the whole scenario that he described.

I hope and I trust that he has been very involved with the Ontario Speaks program and working currently with this government and the concerns that we have on Canadian unity. As we see the struggles in Canada, probably the number one thing that's been holding us back over the years has been this separatist movement. You certainly hear it outside of the country. If you visit almost any country in the world, the first question is about Quebec and, "Will Canada really hold together?"

I did hear him make reference to some of the things that he agrees with and doesn't agree with in our government. Certainly with the tradition of tax, spend and borrow that the Liberals have had in the past, I can understand why they wouldn't want to agree with some of things we're doing.

He talked about some of the cuts we've made. Yes, some of those reductions in funding were very difficult to make. I can tell you it wasn't particularly fun on any side of the House as we went through it, but they were absolutely necessary, having followed through on the kind of tax, spend and borrow that had been going on, putting us well over \$100 billion into debt.

As I mentioned last night when I spoke, this happens to be, I believe, one of the most compassionate governments that the province of Ontario has ever seen in that we're concerned about our future, our children's future and our grandchildren's future, something that hasn't been going on in the last 10 years.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Scarborough-Agincourt has two minutes to respond.

Mr Phillips: I appreciate the comments from everybody, particularly the member for Northumberland. I'd just say, and I always say this to my business friends, you know that over the three years Harris has decided to give a \$9-billion tax break. Do you know something? Every penny of that we've got to go out and borrow. Every penny. I'm glad the member for Northumberland mentioned that. Do you know much money that's going to cost us just in the first three years in extra interest costs? Seven hundred million dollars. Then they'll say: "It pays for itself. It's a magical machine."

I took a look at the federal government's income tax revenue and the provincial government's income tax revenue. The federal government's income tax revenue has gone up 21%, the provincial income tax revenue roughly 3% because of the tax cuts. They don't like to hear this, but I say to the taxpayers, \$700 million of interest costs to fund Mike Harris's tax cut because we had to borrow every penny of it.

2030

I know we have to deal with the deficit. All the people who are on social assistance, the hospitals that you've cut the spending on, the capital costs you've cut out of school boards, the \$600 million you've added on to the property tax, they all understand that the deficit is a problem. What they can't understand is, how can we afford to give \$500

million in tax breaks to people making more than a quarter of a million dollars a year? That doesn't make any sense.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Marchese: Speaker, it's okay; they're quiet now. You've tamed them.

The Acting Speaker: I'm looking over there.

Mr Marchese: I'm very happy to have this opportunity. I'm glad we're on live again. This is not a repeat. We're on until 9:30 live, the Ontario forum on politics here.

I just want to briefly comment on the member for Northumberland, who speaks about this government being one of the most compassionate governments ever. You've just got to love that guy. The question is, does he really mean it, and if he does, is there anybody out there who believes it?

I say to the member for Kitchener, if compassion means that you cut \$1 billion or so of money to those on social assistance, the most needy in society, and you then give —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. We're down to less than an hour to go this evening, and to some of us that will be something to aim for. Don't let me have to institute the severe rules that are available to me. Please let the member continue.

Mr Marchese: Thank you, Speaker, for that intervention.

Speaker, understand this, because I'm sure you're quite capable of comprehending this issue of compassion: They give a \$5-billion income tax cut a year with the next cut that's coming in the next few days —

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): Gerry just said \$9 million. Is Gerry wrong?

Mr Marchese: No, wait, Steve, no. He did come back to the \$5 billion. He came back to the \$5 billion. It's five billion bucks to the most —

Mr Gilchrist: I want to get a correction.

Mr Marchese: No, no, please don't interrupt again. Thank you.

These guys here are giving a break to the wealthiest Ontarians to the tune of a \$5-billion tax break, half of which goes to the wealthiest of Ontarians, and these guys say this is what they mean by compassion. They take \$1 billion away from those on social assistance, many of whom they're forcing out into the streets with the cuts they made there and the changes they made through the tenant protection package, forcing a lot of low-income people out in the streets. They call that compassion. Giving billions away to their rich friends is part of that same value system. Come on, member for Northumberland, please, you drive tears to my eyes when you speak in such terms. How can you think anybody believes that baloney? How?

Mr Bradley: Conrad Black believes it.

Mr Marchese: I know Mike Harris believes it.

I saw Conrad Black today at the mass for the late Mr Bassett. I know that he likes these cuts because he benefits. His pockets are deeper than anyone you can think of. He loves the money. With that money he wants to

create another national paper because the papers that are already in existence like the *Globe* and the *Sun* are just not right-wing enough. We need true ideological Conservative values of the Reform kind, so we need yet another paper. Because we haven't filled the air waves and the print media with enough of that stuff, we need yet one more. The guy controls 60% of all the print media in this country and wants to produce yet another one.

How do you think he does it? Through the tax break from the compassion that the member for Northumberland speaks of, that compassion that you have towards the wealthy, who say, "Good God, if only we had a few more dollars, how much more we could do with it." That's what he means by compassion.

Most revealing in the throne speech was Mike Harris's remark — read through the Speaker, of course. You'll recall a few speeches ago when M. Harris, the Premier, said, "Your government is doing what it said it would do, and it will continue." You recall that hubris, that belligerence, that determination not to be sidestepped in any way, not to be deterred, not to be pushed around. Mr Harris was clear then.

He said in his later speech from the throne, delivered by the Lieutenant Governor, "We are unconditionally committed to reaching our goal of a better Ontario for all, but we are very open to discussing how we get there." He also adds: "Your government is listening. Your government hears you. Your government will move forward with care." Contrast that to the belligerence of the first few speeches that were made in this place, when he says, "Your government is doing what it said it would do, and it will continue."

This is the same Attila the Hun who's about to tell the public: "The barbarism that was committed in the past will cease. We recognize it and we're now going to consult with you, and not only that, we listen, and not only that, we are open to this new way that we are creating in the next year before the election." Do you believe this Attila the Hun transforming himself into a new man? I don't believe it.

When you hear comments such as the pregnant women spending their \$37 allowance on beer, this tiger turned pussycat reveals his fangs on an ongoing basis. The fangs are always there. They may retract from time to time, based on the polling that they've done to show that he's a nasty sort of guy. The tiger turned pussycat from time to time reveals the fangs. They come out, and they come out against those poor pregnant women on welfare. The guy says, "We've got to take their money away because they spend it on beer."

Mr Bradley: And the nurses and the hula-hoops.

Mr Marchese: The nurses and the hula-hoops. Who forgot that one? What a wonderful metaphor that one was.

In keeping with this whole spirit of Mike transforming himself into a nice guy, do you believe it? Does anybody watching believe that? Recall Bill 26, which gives ministers absolute power to do what the hell they want. Recall the amalgamation of the city of Toronto with the others, where we voted and 76% said no, and Mike said:

"Too bad. Sorry, that was not a referendum; that was just a little poll you did. It wasn't really a referendum." That was their tough Mike. That tough Mike has turned pussycat now. Do you believe it?

I tell you, it reminds me of a song by Eric Burdon and The Animals, which goes something like this: "I'm just a soul whose intentions are good/Oh Lord, please don't let me be misunderstood." Do you recall that one? This is Mike Harris, a misunderstood Premier. He really cares. He's a compassionate man. In fact, when he beats up on welfare people, he doesn't really mean it. He's doing it for their own good, right, Steve? When Mike beats up on these women, on these young people, on tenants, he's really trying to give them a hand up. The poor man is a misunderstood man. All he needs is a more compassionate media, someone who understands him a little better. For three years the poor man has been crawling about whacking everybody over the head, and later he says: "I've been misunderstood. I really need sympathy from somebody."

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): Satisfaction.
2040

Mr Marchese: There you go, the other song. He can't get any satisfaction, from the Rolling Stones. That's the song he should be singing: "I can't get no satisfaction." That's what Mike was doing in his previous three years.

The question is, does the public believe this man has been transformed, this new religious revival that we find through the new Mike and the fine chorus of members that we have on the other side? It is a fine band we've got on the other side.

Compassion: this poor, misunderstood Mike Harris is giving \$5 billion away to people who really need it. That's the kind of politics we've got to deal with in this province. The \$5 billion that could have been put aside to deal with the deficit is going out of our coffers to give to people with deep pockets, M. Conrad Black, M. Stronach and the like. That's compassion? Is that the kind of compassion Mike Harris is talking about? Is that how he is misunderstood?

These dollars do not create work. I've often quoted people in the past: Professor Donner, who has spoken on many occasions in this regard, who says that basically this tax cut is an ideological tool, that tax cuts are ultimately for the purpose of eroding the role of government and the expectations people have of government. They are not designed to create jobs, because they do not. There is absolutely no evidence whatsoever that you —

Mr Galt: Economics 101.

Mr Marchese: No, it's not Economics 101, member for Northumberland. If that is true, member for Northumberland, you bring the research to me in your Economics 101, the evidence you have gathered that talks about the tax cuts that you folks have made and the jobs they have created. Other than you saying so, there is absolutely no evidence of that.

What you have done ideologically is to convince a whole lot of people they're getting a whole lot of money back, except a whole lot of people at the bottom line are getting very little back. That's why if you ask them,

"Have you seen anything in your paycheque?" they say no.

The other matter I wanted to talk briefly to is the fact — and I made mention of this — that Ben Cherniavsky is the person who conducted a study for the government's technical committee on business taxation. He concluded that there appears to be no evidence or linkage between the general level of taxes in an economy and the level of employment. He points out that Sweden, with one of the highest tax burdens of all industrialized countries, also has the third-lowest unemployment rate, while Australia, which has one of the lowest taxation rates, still suffers from relatively high unemployment.

Steve, doesn't that tell you something? We're talking about studies here that reveal that a place like Australia, which has the lowest taxation rate, has a high unemployment level. According to your Economics 101, member for Northumberland, unemployment presumably should be down. But it has the highest level of unemployment, based on its lowest level of taxation on their companies. Where do you see the logic in that? These are studies we're talking about. We're not just dreaming it up for my purposes or the purposes of those who are watching.

If income tax cuts to the provincial rates only benefit the wealthy, they do not create jobs and it's a drain on provincial coffers. If the reduction of taxation levels produces no measurable employment increases, why would you do it? Why take money away from the middle class in order to help the corporations and in order to help the very wealthy individuals in this society? Why would you do that?

I'll tell you why you do it. Because you're ideologically committed to that kind of politics, ideologically committed to a 1990 model of social Darwinism, a model that deliberately creates a contingency workforce.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Speaker, one of the members is not sitting in his seat and is very loud.

The Acting Speaker: The back row, we would like to see you make out the rest of the evening here. We invite you to stay and help, but if you don't want to, then I'll look after that. I have to be able to hear the speaker speaking. Just put a lid over that, if you don't mind.

Mr Marchese: Thank you, Speaker. I was trying to alert you to the fact that two of the members — one from Kitchener is here. I usually like his interventions, except he's very loud with the other member who usually sits across from me. So if he could just control that, it would be very helpful.

The ideology of this government is deliberately creating a reserve army of workers, a contingency workforce that has the effect of creating a lot of part-time workers. It has the effect of creating no pensions or lower pensions, the effect of creating no security — in fact, a lot of insecurity — the effect of creating no benefits or fewer benefits and reducing union representation.

Mr Bradley: Jobettes.

Mr Marchese: The little jobettes that we have referred to in the past. That's really the intent of what this is all

about. This transnational economy that you fine Tories are promoting is destroying the middle class everywhere around the world, including Canada.

Interjection.

M. Ford laughs with that typical laugh of his. I love it. Ha, ha, ha. He laughs.

The middle classes in this country and in this province know they are disappearing as a class. Their numbers are reducing. Many of them have to work at two or three jobs to maintain the same level of middle-class status they used to have, and M. Ford laughs. This is the kind of economy these people are promoting. That's what these people are committed to. The top third of the world are getting richer, the bottom third more desperate and the middle third are falling steadily downward. You are creating an underclass in this province and in this country.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): Wrong tense.

Mr Marchese: Joe, quiet down.

You're creating an underclass in this country. The middle class is slipping in stature. It is absorbing a great deal of the tax load through the user fees that you have now imposed — user fees, administrative fees. You're recovering money from all sorts of different places to make up for the loss you've got, to make up for the income tax cut you've given your rich buddies.

We are talking here about a strategy that even the Bank of Canada admits is part of your own ideological strategy. We saw a leaked document from the Bank of Canada, an internal document that supports what they call a natural level of high unemployment in developed countries to keep competition strong and wage demands low. That's what these people are talking about. When they say, "We need to be competitive," they mean creating more part-time jobs. They mean no pensions — or lower pensions — insecurity of their own economic position, no benefits, indeed fewer benefits and very little union representation. That's what this is all about.

The question is, are you, the middle-class person, buying into this kind of value system that these Tories are creating? That's what we're talking about. It is a value system that we object to, that we oppose, that is radically different from ours. And I tell you, it's radically different from your own.

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The Canada Health Act embodies in it wonderful socialist principles. I know many of you shrink at the thought that those principles might be socialist in their nature, but they are. Portability, public administration, comprehensiveness, universality, they are socialist principles, things that we in this society support strongly. We are witnessing an erosion of those principles. I say to the people watching, if you support a health care system that is founded on those socialist principles that you probably never thought about, you need to think about them and you need to support them because these guys here, including our federal friends, are eroding those principles that many of us have supported for a long time. They are privatizing everything that comes in front of their little hands and they're doing it in a way that is slow, in a way that

becomes imperceptible to most, but by the time you figure it out, you've been had. That's the strategy because they can't kill it right away.

This throne speech does not change the colours of Mike Harris's ideology. He was a tiger before, he was Attila the Hun before, he will continue to be so, and that's what people need to see. Don't be deceived.

The Acting Speaker: Comments or questions?

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): It's quite fascinating listening to the new economics across the way. I can't quite believe my ears. Cited on some vague academic study, we have Australia with higher taxes means you have more jobs; we know it with Sweden. When you have a low-tax environment, you have higher unemployment. What kind of upside-down thinking is that?

This is a member across the way who was involved with a government that practised fiscal irresponsibility to the heights of the absurd. It's unbelievable to think that he can stand in his place and talk about values. The values of what? Welfare dependency. The more people on welfare, the better off we are. The more child poverty there is, the better off we are.

I saw recently about a year ago, from the old Metro where they were citing child poverty statistics starting in 1995, a rather bizarre interpretation, but I could see what the member is feeding into here: There was no child poverty prior to 1995. If there wasn't, how come the welfare dependency rates were so high?

But the most absurd thing you keep hearing is that the higher the taxes then, the better off we are. At that rate, you would have a taxation rate of 100% where the government took everything off you and you would have to submit some kind of list of needs to some bureaucrat. That's the sort of thing this party over there has practised for years. Imprudence, irresponsible fiscal spending — the list goes on.

Mr Bradley: I'm going to direct a couple of questions to my friend from Fort York because I think he'll have some good answers for them. The first is whether he's heard of Dr Joseph Kushner of Brock University who is a small-c conservative economist. In fact, he's referred to on St Catharines city council as either Professor Negative or Dr No because he continues to oppose unnecessary expenditures at the municipal level.

Now I asked Dr Kushner about the tax cut: "Is this going to be good for the province? You're the conservative of conservatives. What do conservative economists say about this?" He said: "It has a contractionary effect. When you combine government cuts with an income tax cut, in fact it's a contractionary effect, not an expansionary effect." But he said, "You know with that strong, booming US economy, you probably won't notice it as much." This is what we have. I remember that well.

The second part I want to direct to my friend from Fort York is this: Does he believe that the problem is a communication problem or is it the message that's the problem with this government? Everybody said: "You're destroying the health care system. You're closing the hospitals despite the fact Mike Harris promised that he

wouldn't close any hospitals." They're closing 32 hospitals and they're destroying the education system in many ways by underfunding it, by withdrawing funding from it and by picking a fight with those who deliver education services on the front lines. He has a new image out there. They say, "The problem isn't what we're doing, it's the message." Does the member agree it's the message or is it communication? What is the problem?

Mr Galt: I certainly enjoyed the remarks from the member for Fort York. On performance I give him at least a 5.9.

In the beginning he referred to my comments about a compassionate government, and what I interpret as a compassionate government is one that's fiscally responsible, one that believes only in spending the revenues of taxation that it takes in and believes that you should pay your bills and not dump them on to future generations. What I understand from him as compassionate is spending \$10 billion to \$12 billion a year more than you take in, dumping that on to future generations, putting it on your future children, doubling the debt during your term in office, and that's being compassionate.

Then in just a mere decade what did the Liberals and the NDP do with the welfare rolls? They went up four times, quadrupled during their terms. That's being compassionate. When did food banks come in? In 1985, that was the first we saw food banks and it took right off. I suppose that's being compassionate, driving the need for food banks. Unemployment went up. I suppose that's being compassionate in your term in office. Then you created a net minus 10,000 new jobs — that's being compassionate — while the rest of Canada created over 400,000 net new jobs from 1990 to 1995. You lost 10,000 jobs. I suppose that's being compassionate.

The job wanted index disappeared out of sight during your term. Business was leaving this country like the 401 wasn't big enough to get them out of this country. They were going to New Brunswick. They were going to the States. They were going everywhere and bankruptcy in this country was at a phenomenal record level during your term. I suppose you call that being a compassionate government during your extended, overrated five-year term that was unnecessary.

Mr Caplan: It's interesting to hear the member for Northumberland talk about food banks. He would be aware that the number of people in the greater Toronto area who've been going to food banks has begun to increase. We're up to almost 140,000 people. I know, my friend the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, that you shouldn't find this amusing, sir. This is very, very interesting that you would identify that. In this time of supposed prosperity we have more people who are going hungry, who need food. That is certainly true, my friend from Scarborough.

I would also point out that I have some very interesting labour market information. In 1989, when I believe my party and some of my colleagues were in government, the participation rate for youth in the job market was somewhere around 70.6%. In 1997, by contrast, it was down to

61.2%, a drop of almost 10%, which is unprecedented in that period of time. What it means, my friends, is that fewer young people are able to find work. From 1989 to 1997, we have a generation of people who have been left behind because of the policies of this government. This government does not care about our young people. This government has done nothing to help our young people and more of them, double the number, are now unemployed than those over 25. That is shocking, the uncaring attitude that my friends opposite have towards the next generation, the people who will need to be our leaders, our captains of industry. The people who are going to pay for your social assistance can't find jobs. When are you going to do something because so far you've given them the back of your hand —

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, member for Oriole. The member for Fort York has two minutes to wrap up.

Mr Marchese: I thank all my friends for having made their remarks. They covered so much ground and I only have two minutes and there's so much to respond to.

Mr Spina: Sing us a song.

Mr Marchese: I will try to sing another song when I come back at another later time.

On the whole issue of what the member for Northumberland said, he defines compassion as fiscal responsibility, as paying your bills as you go, and then he wandered off into another area having nothing to do with the definition of "compassion."

I am worried because as you guys decrease the English courses in the high schools to increase the sciences, I'm profoundly concerned about what we are learning by way of definition, because if you look up "compassion," that's not what it's going to tell you. Unless you've redefined "compassion" or are going to create your own dictionary, which I suspect you might do, compassion doesn't fit in there. I beg to differ with you so strongly in this regard but I'm concerned about you. I hope there aren't too many other members who agree with that definition because if they do, we're in a whole lot of trouble.

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Mr Galt: You agree with your definition.

Mr Marchese: Every common sense person you are addressing believes what I'm talking about when I speak about compassion.

Poverty has gone up, income inequality has gone up because the middle class is slipping downward. That is the subclass that we are creating. The homelessness has gone up, food bank use has gone up, shelter use has gone up and the list goes on and on.

You talk about your fiscal responsibility, a definition of "compassion" and you have the ideological gall to say, "We're giving \$5 billion away for tax cuts," even though that's a whole drain on our social services and you think that's all right. That's why we speak of values. People need to know that the values of this government are radically going to hurt everybody, especially the middle class.

The Acting Speaker: I thank the member for Fort York. Further debate?

Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre): For a minute there I was starting to feel sorry for the member for Fort York. Then I remembered what it was like trying to live through the NDP years.

Speaker, I'd like to ask for unanimous agreement to share my time with the member for Scarborough East.

The Acting Speaker: Is it agreed? Agreed.

Mr Young: The second speech from the throne in the 36th Parliament I believe marks the dawn of a new optimism in Ontario. We've made hard decisions and we've weathered difficult times, but the horizon is in view and the future gets brighter with each step forward. In the past two years we've been restructuring and rebuilding, creating and recreating. Now, as the dust settles, we are starting to see more and more the good results of our hard work.

Growth in Ontario has reached heights unmatched elsewhere in Canada. In fact, economic growth is almost double that of the other nine provinces. More Ontarians have jobs today than at any other time in the history of our province. As we reduce our deficit, an optimum health management system, a superior education system and the safest communities in North America are all within our reach for the first time. We are now in a transitional stage, beyond developing and introducing change, into implementing and managing change. Our constituents have given us the tools to get that process under way, their concerns, their thoughts and their ideas.

Over the past few months in my riding of Halton Centre I consulted with people who are concerned about the future of their country, people who want to live without fear of crime in their communities, with seniors, with child advocates, small business and tourism operators.

Premier Harris met with and listened to my constituents at the Muddy Duck Restaurant in Milton. The Ontario Crime Control Commission listened to my constituents' concerns about crime at the Oakville town hall. Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs Dianne Cunningham listened to my constituents' ideas on Canadian unity at the Oakville Canadian Club. Minister of Transportation Tony Clement received input on referendum legislation from people in north Burlington. Minister responsible for seniors' issues Cam Jackson visited a local seniors' residence in my riding to hear seniors' concerns. Parliamentary assistants to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism Ted Arnot and Leo Jordan consulted with small businesses in my community and stakeholders in tourism. These are their views and insights. Their hopes and concerns will drive my actions and the actions of our government in the coming months.

I've also taken stock, in the feedback I've received on a daily basis from my constituents — mail, telephone calls, letters and e-mail — where many have assured me our government is on the right track in reducing income taxes, promoting job growth, promoting excellence in education and redefining how social assistance works in our society. Others reaffirmed what our priorities must include: health care, children and personal safety.

In Halton, long-term care has been a growing concern. We have a growing population of seniors and middle-aged people living in our community, yet Halton has received the short end of the stick by previous governments when it came to funding for health care services. Now the tide is turning.

Excellent community-based services such as in-home nursing by the VON, homemaking services, Meals on Wheels, integration programs such as the Halton regional adult day services, supportive housing programs and services for people with disabilities are being recognized by this government as vital components of health care in the 1990s in this throne speech.

We first learned in the throne speech that there would be a major initiative regarding new long-term-care beds and funding for community services. The process has already begun and will be expanding — 20,000 new long-term-care beds in Ontario over the next eight years. Halton is to receive 1,500 new long-term-care beds at the cost of \$43.7 million.

The tide is also turning for the children of this province. In the fall we will have a new education system which will yield better results and will prepare our students for whatever road they choose to take in the future.

We have developed a challenging new curriculum, including an exceptional new science program that students can really sink their teeth into.

Standardized testing will act as a barometer by which parents and teachers will measure student success, standardized report cards will better reflect their progress, teachers will spend more time in the classroom and there will be more innovative learning opportunities such as high-tech resources.

We have guaranteed funding for classroom supplies and books and specialists to complement teachers' lessons.

We're guaranteeing funding for junior kindergarten and commissioning experts Dr Fraser Mustard and the Honourable Margaret McCain to conduct a study to determine how we might give young and preschool children a better chance for success in the years ahead.

In the upcoming school year, the Halton district public school board will see classroom spending increase by over \$3 million. The historically underfunded Halton separate school board will receive a \$7.8-million increase in classroom spending in 1998-99, increasing to \$15.6 million in the year 2000 due to expected growth.

For the first time ever, Ontario has a minister with specific responsibilities for children. Our government, in partnership with the Canadian Living Foundation for Families, is providing \$5 million to help parents and communities set up and expand local nutrition programs.

Approximately 750,000 Ontario preschool children up to age four will benefit from \$10-million funding for the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program, which identifies and prevents future developmental problems of newborns and children at risk.

Seventy-five thousand preschool children with speech and language disorders will benefit from our \$20-million

investment to expand services for them. Ten million dollars is being provided annually in education and support for expectant mothers and families.

Our government has also stepped up efforts immensely to enforce payment of child support orders by deadbeat parents, including reports to credit bureaus and suspensions of drivers' licences. Private collection agencies are being used to assist in collecting support payments which previously were thought to be uncollectable.

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Since September 1995, most important of all, 340,000 more people have jobs in Ontario. Nothing helps children more than an opportunity for their parents to get a new job — employment, independence. One of my constituents once told me, "It is an honour to work," and I agree.

We've also been creative and innovative in our approach to solving the problems associated with crime in Ontario. We have tougher standards for parole. We're finally approaching success in our goal to have the federal government amend the Young Offenders Act to include some real deterrents. We're getting the attention of youthful offenders through strict discipline facilities. We feel we'll have a real impact in turning a young life around before it becomes a life of crime.

Our Ontario Crime Control Commission is searching the globe for new ideas that have great potential to work in Ontario. For example, the broken-windows theory, applied very successfully in New York City, is based on a philosophy that zero tolerance for minor crimes will lead to a reduction in major crimes. It concludes that if people take ownership of their own communities, that will prevent the erosion of that community, and it works. If you take care to replace the first broken window, you are far less likely to end up with a building full of broken windows.

Although we are not yet finished with the job we started, the foundation is complete and the structure is sound. I believe we're well on our way to a new Ontario, with the absolute best health management system in North America, unlimited opportunities for our children and a society that takes ownership of the safety and order of our streets.

To my friends in the opposition I quote the words of George Bernard Shaw: "Some men see things as they are and ask why. Others dream things that never were and ask why not."

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Scarborough East.

Mr Gilchrist: I'm indeed pleased to rise, and I appreciate the member for Halton North's agreeing to give me some of his speaking time today.

It has been ably demonstrated from the comments made by my colleagues already that when it comes to compassion, when it comes to consulting, when it comes to listening to the hopes and aspirations of the people of Ontario, our government has set a new standard, a higher standard than any government in the past.

To my colleague from Fort York, who was troubled by definitions and suggested there was a need for remedial

English, let me read from Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, ninth edition, that compassion is being sympathetic. It is a "sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it."

I would think that if the member opposite actually believed that the 82 members of the Conservative caucus didn't want to remedy the problems out there, he'd have a hard time reconciling that with the fact that we stood for office and the fact that a year before the election we laid out the most detailed platform for the people of Ontario to consult, to ruminate on, and that a majority of those voters in the ridings represented by these 82 members said that was the path to go down; that the things your government had done and the Liberal government before you had done were totally bereft of compassion.

No one could look at a province as rich as Ontario historically had been, that boasted one out of every eight people being on government assistance on the day of the election, and say that was a compassionate government. No one could look at the net loss of jobs in the five years you were here, in direct contrast with all the rest of Canada, and say that you were compassionate. No one could look at the fact that on issues such as homelessness, the size of food banks, the need for hostels, no government had done as much to drive up social costs, to dramatically increase problems in the social safety net as your government and the Liberal government before it. The bottom line: Not only were you bereft of compassion, you were bereft of any fiscal responsibility.

That's really what the throne speech reiterated, the fact that we did set a different path. While the member opposite is troubled that the throne speech this time would suggest more of the same, it's because the idea of actually keeping your promises was something quite foreign to the last two governments as well. They said one thing during the election campaign and did something totally different. If you don't believe me, ask all the union members about the social contract. I don't think any of them were asked in the 1990 election if they'd like to lose pay and lose working days.

The fact is that as much as it frustrates the members opposite, the hallmark of our government has been honouring our promises. In fact, over the next year or two, whatever the remaining time is left in this government, we intend to see the few remaining promises that are still on the order paper turned into legislation, turned into concrete realization of the hopes and dreams and aspirations of the people who placed their "X" beside Conservative names in the 1995 election. We owe that much at least.

We certainly faced a myriad of challenges after coming in in 1995. As the member opposite knows, the kinds of numbers that were being floated by the NDP government in terms of their budget loss immediately before the election were found to be understated by \$2 billion, \$2 billion they goofed on and the year was only days old. That was the extent of their fiscal skills.

The bottom line for us was that we had to make certain tough choices. We had to do belt-tightening consistent with those promises. Not all those decisions have been

easy ones but they have started to pay off. That's the good news.

As we were able to demonstrate this week to even the most partisan members opposite or outside this chamber, we have taken every penny that has been wrested from administrative fat and out-of-date technology and administrative means in hospitals and other aspects of the health care system and reinvested it into new technology, into long-term-care beds, into all sorts of new initiatives to recognize the health problems that exist today — a health model recognizing the needs of 1998, not 1950.

The bottom line is that since 1988, not your government nor your government had the vision, the foresight or the compassion to add one long-term-care bed in any part of this province. At the same time, as any demographer would tell you, we had a dramatically aging population.

Lost in some of the press reports about the creation of the long-term-care beds this week was the fact that the total backlog of long-term-care beds in Ontario will be addressed by the one announcement we made this week: 20,000 beds, an expenditure of \$1.2 billion, and that's on top of \$1 billion we've already added to the budget of the Ministry of Health that was outstanding on the day we were elected.

The bottom line was that we faced challenges in many other ministries as well. Education, of course, was another one. We had seen the previous governments drive up the debt load in this province to \$100 billion. The interest servicing cost alone was \$9 billion. That is more than the province was ponying up for its share of education — \$9 billion that's not available for us to spend on schools or on hospitals or on roads, \$9 billion going to the lenders who had profited by the fiscal lunacy of the other two governments.

So yes, in education we had some tough choices to make too, but every one of them was consistent with our promises. We said we would take hundreds of millions of dollars out of administration in education, but we plowed those same hundreds of millions back into the classroom where kids will truly benefit from investments in new computers, in new textbooks, in smaller class size and in more teachers.

Again, while the members opposite don't want to believe it, and they sure won't be putting it in their householders, this September, just to use the Toronto board as an example, there is \$39 million more being spent on the category of teachers alone in the Toronto school board. So the bottom line is that class sizes will be smaller, the board will have \$39 million more to spend on more teachers, and we're going to see more money spent on textbooks and more money spent on computers.

That's the sign of a compassionate government and a government that recognizes you manage not for tomorrow's Toronto Star headline, because our Liberal friends there write it anyway. It's small wonder that's where they get their direction, and certainly that's where they get direction in the five years they were in office.

2120

The hallmark of Tory governments in the 1950s and the 1960s and the 1970s was to plan 10 and 20 years into the future. We've demonstrated, when it comes to education changes, we've got that foresight. When it comes to restructuring in our hospitals and our nursing homes, we've got that foresight. When it comes to the re-engineering of the social safety net to encourage people to go out and find the jobs that are out there in droves — early this afternoon, walking back from the funeral of John Bassett, I was talking to a gentleman who's a headhunter. He told me he has 147 jobs outstanding right now at a starting salary of \$60,000 or more and he can't find people to fill those jobs. That's the legacy of their education system. That's the legacy of their 10 years in office.

We don't have people trained to fill the jobs that are in high demand today. All the rest of the world recognizing that greater computer skills, greater high-tech investments — that's where governments should have been leading, but not these two. They had their head in the sand.

I'm very proud that this throne speech carries on a three-year tradition of having foresight, of having vision, of recognizing a new and changing environment and of meeting the needs of Ontario today and in the future.

Applause.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Bradley: I appreciate the applause from the government benches. Now you know why we in the opposition granted permission to split the time between the two parties — because the more we can get on television of the member for Scarborough East, the better it will be for the province, I assure you, because this is the voice of the new Conservative Party of Ontario, in case people out there didn't know.

Remember Bill Davis and how middle of the road he was, thoughtful and so on, and Bob Welch and Tom Wells? Well, this is the new voice. This is the new Conservative Party in Ontario.

Now I'm worried about Hugh Segal. I thought Hugh Segal had the leadership wrapped up. The member for Brampton South floated a rumour that he was running. He had his executive assistant float the rumour so that everybody would take pictures of him and say he was running. But now I think we have a new candidate for the Conservative Party and that candidate is Steve Gilchrist.

Surely if anyone could bring the right wing into the federal Conservative Party, it would be the member for Scarborough East, who just delivered his speech here this evening, although I am told he would have to join the Conservative Party federally. He'd have to renounce his Reform Party membership in Scarborough and join the federal Conservative Party.

I do want to recommend him. I know Hugh Segal watches this program every night. I want to tell Joe Clark and Hugh Segal that there is competition. Any time that you need permission on the Conservative side of the benches to have Steve Gilchrist speak in this House, we will be more than glad to grant that permission.

Mr Marchese: The two speakers from Scarborough East and Halton Centre have covered a lot of ground so it's difficult to comment on everything, but I'll comment on two areas: fiscal responsibility and the promises.

On the whole issue of the new definition of compassion as being fiscally responsible, I want to comment that the federal Liberal government has defeated its deficit. It wrestled it to the ground. They didn't do it by giving an income tax cut, isn't that right?

Mr Caplan: This is true.

Mr Marchese: How did they do it? The interest rates went down. That was a good thing. They got 23 billion bucks coming in. That really did it. They did cut a whole heap of money on those poor unemployed, a lot more than they want to claim, but 40% of that reduction to the deficit was due to the cuts they made to unemployment insurance. Mostly it was dealt with because of the booming economy they've had in the last couple of years.

Do you not believe, Speaker, that Harris could have wrestled to the ground the deficit problem that we had by the mere booming of this economy that they love to boast about? How come they haven't wrestled it to the ground? I'll tell you. They haven't wrestled it to the ground because they've got to borrow 5 billion bucks every year to give an income tax cut to their buddies.

On the issue of promises, you recall Mike Harris saying, "Not one cent will be cut from education." Remember that? He says, "Not one cent will be taken out of hospitals and no hospitals will close." Remember he said he was going to eat his straw hat if one cent was taken out of education and health. He did. I never saw the guy eat his straw hat, for God's sake. He broke his promises on the issue of taking money out of education and health. Money was taken out by the billions —

The Acting Speaker: Thanks to the member for Fort York.

Mr Spina: I came across this statement made November 8, 1997, just a few months ago, and it's federal industry Minister John Manley crediting "strong export activity," but adding that "domestic gains can also be linked to Ontario's cuts to personal income tax."

"The taxpayers have more money in their pockets and therefore they have more money to spend," Manley said. "Tax cuts increase domestic consumption." This only leads me to ask one question: Is John Manley a blue Grit?

The Acting Speaker: The member for Scarborough East has two minutes to respond.

Mr Gilchrist: Thank you to the members for St Catharines, Brampton North and Fort York for their kind comments and in particular the member for Brampton North for demonstrating once again that depending what day of the week it is or which Liberal you talk to, you'll either get an NDP point of view or a Conservative point of view, depending on what the polls show.

It's funny that you're mentioning newspaper articles because just in the clipping service that's come in today, Fleming college — "Growth means 21 new staff positions," crediting the funding and increased demand at their school.

More mine inspectors coming up, showing that our government is truly committed to mine safety and all workplace safety.

We've got a full-page article, a woman praising us for restoring payments to hundreds of widows who had been deprived under the former rules of the Workers' Compensation Board of any kind of a pension because they'd remarried. Five hundred widows, many of them very low income, have now seen compassion from this government, not from the other two.

"Workfare Plan Quietly Scoring Some Success," in the London Free Press, of all newspapers, talking about how our plan of showing people how to pull themselves up by the boot straps, giving them a hand up instead of a handout, is starting to pay off.

And perhaps the best one: "Tax Study Reveals Inequities. The largest-ever study on income taxes done in Canada, called Where the Money Goes: The Distribution of Taxes and Benefits in Canada, has shown categorically that tax cuts benefit primarily families earning less than \$40,000 a year." The author says we need more of them to stimulate growth in the economy.

The Acting Speaker: I want to go through the procedure for voting on the speech from the throne.

On Monday, April 27, 1998, Mrs Elliott moved, seconded by Mr O'Toole, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To the Honourable Hilary M. Weston, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has addressed to us.

On Tuesday, April 28, 1998, Mr McGuinty moved that the address in reply to the speech from the throne be amended by adding the following thereto:

Whereas the Harris government has ignored the needs of patients and compromised patient care by firing 10,000 nurses, cutting hospital budgets by \$800 million annually and threatening to close 32 community hospitals; and

Whereas the Harris government has ignored teachers, parents and students by cutting over \$1 billion from our children's classrooms, forcing the elimination of programs such as junior kindergarten and adult education and continually attacked friends of public education; and

Whereas the Harris government has refused to listen to the voices of children by ignoring the need to reform the child welfare system, by reducing the benefits available to children on welfare and by failing to make children a real priority in Ontario; and

Whereas despite promises not to open unwelcomed neighbourhood casinos, the Harris government has recklessly moved ahead to create 44 neighbourhood casinos; and

Whereas the Mike Harris government has broken its promise to not cut programs to the disabled and has done nothing to increase the access that disabled people

desperately need to go to school and find jobs and to participate in our communities; and

Whereas Mike Harris holds those less fortunate in contempt and continues his personal attack on the poor and the most vulnerable in Ontario;

This House profoundly regrets that the Harris government has acted on an agenda which has caused significant hardship for our youngest, our oldest, our sickest and our least fortunate in society.

On Wednesday, April 29, 1998, Mr Hampton moved that the amendment to the address in reply to the speech from the throne be amended by adding the following thereto:

This House regrets that the Harris government has taken Ontario in profoundly the wrong direction;

This House regrets that the government has failed to respect the values that have always defined Ontario: cooperation, compassion, competence and community; and

This House regrets that the Harris government has implemented a phoney income tax scheme which, unless it is reversed by the next government of Ontario, will entrench permanently the cuts which are causing hardship for our youngest, our oldest, our sickest and our least fortunate in society.

The first question to be decided is Mr Hampton's amendment to the amendment to the motion.

All those in favour of Mr Hampton's amendment to the amendment to the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed say "nay."

In my opinion the nays have it. Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Excuse me?

"April 30, 1998.

"The Honourable Chris Stockwell, Speaker

"Legislative Assembly of Ontario

"Room 180, Legislative Building

"Toronto, Ontario

"M7A 1A8

"Dear Mr Speaker:

"Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I'd like to request the vote on the amendment to the amendment to the address in reply to the speech from the throne be deferred until Monday, May 4, 1998.

"Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

"Sincerely,

"David Turnbull

"Chief Government Whip."

Is it agreed? The vote is deferred.

The time being past 9:30, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 o'clock next Monday.

The House adjourned at 2134.

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 4 May 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 4 mai 1998

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

EDUCATION WEEK

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): This is Education Week in Ontario. It is a time to celebrate the goals and the strengths and the achievements of public education.

We should all be standing on the rooftops and shouting about how far we have come in meeting our ambitious goal — the goal of providing a quality education to every individual with regard to that individual's needs but without regard to the individual's ability to pay. There is much to celebrate in the fact, for example, that our grade 11 students were among the top in the world on international tests of science; or in the fact that our students perform at least at average levels on national tests, even though we have by far the highest proportion of students writing those tests whose first language is not English; or in the fact that we have the highest proportion of young adults with a secondary school diploma of every province.

But it's hard to remember to celebrate our achievements when we see the chaos the Mike Harris government has brought to education in the past year. After last week, with announcement after announcement of job losses and the knowledge that adult education would be gutted in Toronto and the recognition that dozens and dozens of schools are going to be closed and that special-needs kids and our youngest children are going to lose the support they need, there is more of a sense of shock across the province than there is a sense of celebration.

There is a new challenge to education week this year. It is the challenge of saying loudly and clearly what those of us who are concerned about public education value and how our values are threatened as never before, and why all of us who care will fight to protect public education in the months to come. We want to be able to celebrate Education Week next year —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Statement, member for Algoma.

WATER EXTRACTION PERMIT

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): As of May 1, the Ministry of Environment has issued a permit to the Nova

Group of Sault Ste Marie to take 600 million litres of water from Lake Superior to be bottled and exported into the Asian market. The Ministry of Environment did not even follow its own government's procedures in considering this application. The ministry is required to consult with the sister ministry, the Ministry of Natural Resources, and this was not done, with no explanation why from the minister.

Since 1985, Ontario has been required to consult with neighbouring jurisdictions about any suggestions of taking water from the Great Lakes. This government did not consult with any of those jurisdictions — no explanation why. Also, this provincial government has ignored, in giving this permit, the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909, in which the federal governments of Canada and the United States set up the International Joint Commission with responsibility for protecting boundary waters such as the Great Lakes Basin. It may be that this permit is in violation of that treaty.

Also, under NAFTA, once an export permit is issued and the business begins, it may be impossible to prevent the expansion of the export of this very important natural resource that we should be protecting.

The government should resign on this matter immediately.

PETERBOROUGH ECONOMY

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I rise today in the House to talk about an increase in employment in the great city of Peterborough. The city of Peterborough has been advised that it rates second in all of Canada in job creation.

It was a proud moment for me to stand today and congratulate the many companies and resourceful people of Peterborough in attaining such an outstanding record. A Statistics Canada labour force survey has reported an increase of 12.7% in job growth between 1995 and 1997. This is more than twice the pace of growth in the rest of the country. This growth rate is indicative of over 4,000 jobs being created in this period of time.

Although Medicine Hat was ranked number one, they have done so due to major increases in natural gas production. We in Peterborough can credit a portion of our increase to far more diversification. This increase in jobs is done because of many small companies that build such items as kitchen cabinets and sophisticated electronic measuring instruments, companies like Peterborough Home Hardware Building Centre, Harco Enterprises Ltd,

Swish Maintenance and Strano-Cysco Foodservice. Through their diligent and entrepreneurial spirit, these employees have built their companies in extremely successful businesses.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to sincerely congratulate all the companies in Peterborough that have contributed to this great honour.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): My statement today regards emergency services at Windsor hospitals. Yet again the emergency rooms in Essex county are overburdened, and what concerns Windsorites greatly is that despite all the announcements that are now fanning out across Ontario, what Windsor people realize is that all they are is just announcements. What Windsor people need today is action. What we need is relief in our emergency rooms.

On April 18 we called again, on the first-year anniversary of the closure of the Windsor Western ER, for special intervention. We asked for a tactical unit from the Ministry of Health to swoop down on Windsor and fix our situation right away. Even our hospital administrators are saying that while these announcements are fine, we're talking eight years down the road. What Windsor needs today is immediate relief.

We ask for an announcement that makes a difference. We ask to actually have more nurses in the ER to take care of people. I'd like to ask the members of this House what difference it makes to have more room around a bed when you make a capital announcement when we have the same level of nurses, and that is not enough nurses.

If I may say to the members of this House, you are aware of the health line that we launched in Windsor. You know we've had hundreds of Windsorites call. What difference does it make to Windsor to have announcements when what we really need from this government is action? I implore the Minister of Health to come down with real action for Windsor emergencies.

COMPENSATION FOR HEPATITIS C PATIENTS

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Many members of this Legislature may not know that only moments ago the Premier made a very extraordinary and important announcement for hepatitis C victims in the province of Ontario. I have often said in this House that when a government does the right thing, I'll be the first one to stand and say they've done the right thing. In deciding to extend compensation to those hepatitis C victims who were infected through our blood system prior to 1986, the government has done the right thing.

But let me say on this one that my plaudits go only so far, because I am absolutely disgusted by the way in which we got to this point.

A year ago, the then Minister of Health, Jim Wilson, refused to sit down and talk about compensation.

Originally the position taken by the current minister was, "No compensation." Last week, in answer to one of our questions, she said: "No. No more compensation." The next day on CFRB she said, "We call on the federal government to pay for more compensation." The next thing, she was on a phone call to the other health ministers and she said: "Okay, we agree to the original deal. There will be no more compensation." Then the Premier said: "Oh, no. There's got to be more compensation, but those feds are going to pay for it."

The public doesn't buy any of that. They don't buy this nonsense about legal liability, which is why the Premier now has had to cave in. But you know, it's the right thing that he caved in. We applaud him for that.

MURRAY PORTEOUS

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I'm very proud to acknowledge a gentleman from my riding, Murray Porteous, who has recently been named Ontario's Outstanding Young Farmer.

Murray Porteous, along with his father, his uncle and his brother-in-law, is a partner in the 500-acre Lingwood Farms, a cherry, pear and apple operation. Their operation uses current technology such as leaf sampling and soil mapping to keep pesticide use to a minimum and to achieve a consistency in their crops.

Like any successful activity, farming takes teamwork and creativity. The Porteous farm is no exception, with great teamwork between all partners, family members and seasonal Jamaican workers.

I have known the family for years and worked on their farm during my university days.

Murray is also active in a number of organizations off the farm — the Norfolk Federation of Agriculture, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association and the Agricultural Adaptation Council — and through his work is known by a number of MPPs in the House. He is also on the board of the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair and active in the Full Gospel Fellowship in Simcoe.

I congratulate Murray Porteous on being named Ontario's Outstanding Young Farmer and wish him good luck when competing for Canada's Outstanding Young Farmer as well.

1340

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Bernard Grandmaitre (Ottawa East): My statement is addressed to the Minister of Health, Elizabeth Witmer.

Your health restructuring commission, Minister, removed more than \$120 million in services from the Ottawa-Carleton area. On Friday, with great fanfare, you reinvested \$45.4 million to create 1,300 long-term-care beds over eight years. To make matters worse, the first 300 beds won't be in place before December 1999.

Don't you realize that we have at the present time a waiting list of more than 1,400 people, seniors? Our senior citizens are the fastest-growing population in all of Ontario.

My colleagues in Ottawa-Carleton, including the district health council, are disappointed with your announcement. Would you not agree with your colleague the member for Ottawa-Rideau, Mr Guzzo, that 1,300 beds is inadequate for Ottawa-Carleton?

LTC has been neglected for too long. The last time a provincial government funded new beds in the Ottawa-Carleton area was under a Liberal government. Minister, will you do the right thing and provide us with more beds?

ST CATHARINES DAYS OF ACTION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): It has been an interesting few days in Ontario when we look at where the Premier of the province has been and what he said and where the leader of the Ontario New Democrats, Howard Hampton, has been and what he said.

Let's start with the Premier. He spoke, of course, to his good friends at the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. What did he have to say to them? "You had the courage to stand by our party in a tough election fight and stay with us through some challenging times. I want to assure you that we will not forget the support you've shown us." As we all know, as the government's fiscal agenda unfolds, tomorrow is another payday for the Premier's friends at the Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

But what also happened in the province over the same few days? Thousands of people from all walks of life — not just one segment of society, those who are already doing quite well, thank you very much, but from all walks of life — showed up in St Catharines to protest those very policies that the chamber of commerce is so happy to see.

What did the labour leaders say? Well, Maureen McCarthy, president of the United Food and Commercial Workers provincial council, said: "Mike Harris — Ontario is not yours to destroy. It's ours and we're taking it back."

What did Howard Hampton say? Howard said, "We will never support a society where people are measured by the size of their bank accounts."

If ever we needed to see where there's a province of "us" and "them," as the Tories have created, this is it.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member, will you come to order. I don't find that the least bit amusing, not the least bit amusing.

JESSE'S JOURNEY

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I rise today to tell the House about a very special Ontarian and to ask all Ontarians to take the opportunity to meet him and support his cause.

John Davidson is a resident of London whose son Jesse has Duchenne muscular dystrophy. In 1995, John pushed

Jesse in his wheelchair more than 3,300 kilometres across Ontario in an awareness and fund-raising endeavour. Thanks to the support of generous Ontario residents, Jesse's Journey raised \$1.3 million to fund genetic research.

Although Jesse is now physically unable to participate in such an arduous endeavour, the 1998 event, entitled Jesse's Journey — A Father's Tribute, continues the work of the original journey. It was launched on April 10 and involves John's cross-country trek from St John's, Newfoundland, to Victoria, BC. John will enter Ontario at Cornwall on July 11 and exit the province to Manitoba via Kenora on October 12.

The financial goal is to generate \$10 million to create an endowment fund which will continue to direct \$1 million a year towards research to defeat a host of genetic diseases, including Duchenne muscular dystrophy. It is a formidable goal, and I hope all Ontarians will come out to support John when he passes through your community this summer.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c), the House shall meet from 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm on May 4 and May 6, 1998, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ICE STORM DISASTER RELIEF WEEK

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): It gives me great pleasure to announce that today, May 4, is the first day of Ice Storm Disaster Relief Week across Ontario.

In early January, eastern Ontario was crippled by a horrific ice storm. Many residents in the area were left without heat or electricity. Property, power lines and trees suffered severe damage.

This storm brought out Ontario's true strength: the ability of neighbours, friends and complete strangers to come together quickly and compassionately to help each other at a time of need. Local councils and their staff were invaluable in getting their communities through these very difficult days. Ministers Snobelen, Villeneuve and Sterling as well as Mr Runciman all worked cooperatively through their respect ministries, along with mine, to ensure that public health, safety and security were all maintained. The

staff from each of these ministries and Ontario Hydro deserve our highest praise for the countless hours they put in to get the job done.

Our government reacted quickly to financially assist the devastated communities. We provided eastern Ontario with millions of dollars in emergency assistance. Working with the federal government, we have established various programs providing millions of dollars for disaster recovery to help individuals, businesses and farmers get back on their feet again.

But we've gone even further than that. Under the Ontario disaster relief program, for other disasters, the government has typically matched every fund-raised dollar with \$1. Due to the devastation of the ice storm, this government has agreed to match every fund-raised dollar at the generous level of up to \$4.

This ice storm has been called the worst natural disaster in Canadian history. The Premier, myself and local MPPs Baird, Fox, Guzzo, Jordan, Runciman and Van-koughnet as well as Ministers Villeneuve and Sterling spent a great deal of time in eastern Ontario, surveying the damage and speaking to the people affected by the storm. We were all struck by how the communities came together to help each other, and I know the Premier was proud to tour the area during the local hero's tour in March and personally thank many of the volunteers.

I would also like to acknowledge the hard work of each of the eight local disaster relief committees, as well as the umbrella committee under the direction of Jim Bennett. The people involved have voluntarily devoted hours of time to fund-raising and setting up fair claims processes, and they've done an excellent job.

We all completely support the actions of the Eastern Ontario Disaster Relief Committee, this week in particular, and fully back them in their fund-raising efforts.

We ask citizens in all parts of the province to help those in eastern Ontario, to open their hearts and their wallets, remembering that for every cent they donate, the province kicks in up to four.

Many fund-raising events are planned across Ontario this week and in the following weeks. I hope everyone can get out, participate and support the recovery effort in eastern Ontario.

EDUCATION WEEK

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): Today marks the start of Education Week across the province and I encourage everyone to join me in celebrating Education: Passport to Hope, Opportunities, Jobs and Growth. This theme was chosen for celebrations because the government understands how fundamental a solid and excellent education is to individual success.

Education Week 1998 marks a milestone for every individual involved in education in Ontario. The sector has experienced its most significant change in three decades. No government has taken on the scope of change that we have to raise the standard of education in this province. We have implemented province-wide testing, standard

report cards, class-size limitations, new and more rigorous curricula, more class time, a new high school program, and a funding formula that focuses resources in the classroom, on students and teachers.

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These reforms have been put in place as part of our commitment to improve the quality of education in the province of Ontario. They will help shape an education system known for excellence, discipline and accountability.

Our students stand at the brink of a new millennium. Their education — an Ontario education — must prepare them for the future. It must provide them with the skills and knowledge they will need to succeed in this new century. It must serve as a passport to hope, opportunity, jobs and growth.

Education Week is the time to highlight the accomplishments and successes of all our students. School boards throughout the province are sponsoring an estimated 1,000 events to showcase the work of students. There will be open houses, art displays, technology demonstrations, science fairs, fund-raising activities for local charities, grandparent and volunteer days, and activities to clean up and enhance the environment.

The Ministry of Education and Training has published an extensive list of Education Week events on its Web site. I urge all members of this House to get involved in these activities, perhaps by attending an open house, a school council meeting or planting trees with kids.

This government is committed to providing each of its students with not only the highest-quality education ever delivered in the province of Ontario but also the best-quality education in Canada. Guided by parents, we will focus on measurable results benchmarked against the world.

Education Week allows everyone involved in and dedicated to education in Ontario to celebrate achievements and look forward to even greater accomplishments.

ICE STORM DISASTER RELIEF WEEK

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I want to respond on behalf of my colleagues in the Liberal Party to the statement read a moment ago by the Minister of Municipal Affairs with respect to that vicious ice storm which ravaged eastern Ontario this past January.

I want to join with the minister in paying tribute particularly to all of those who worked so hard and volunteered so much through what was an exceptionally difficult time. I live in the city of Pembroke and we were on the edge of the storm, though many of my constituents in the southern part of the county of Renfrew were hit very hard indeed. The electrical workers, other emergency workers, municipal officials, everyone, people by the score from Vankleek Hill to Bancroft and from Cobden down to Bainsville worked, and worked very hard. We want first and foremost, I think, to congratulate those people who worked under those conditions to make a very

difficult situation bearable. There was much good to acknowledge and there is much positive to reinforce.

But all was not good. I will not myself forget that afternoon in the second week — I think it was Tuesday, January 13 — at a transformer station in Nepean where Bill Farlinger, the chair of Ontario Hydro, with the Minister of Energy at his elbow, was seen by the thousands of people in the region — the chairman of Ontario Hydro — pounding the desk and saying, “I can’t get the information, so I can appreciate the frustration of farmers,” and rural folk particularly, who were desperate to know what the hell was going on and couldn’t find out.

I think if we’ve learned one thing in this, we’ve learned that Ontario Hydro did not have an emergency or a contingency plan that they could quickly put into place. To give the regional municipality of Ottawa-Carleton credit, they appeared to have a plan and they activated it very quickly. Ontario Hydro may have had a plan, but I’ve got to tell you that people I know and am related to, for example, down in Glengarry county, wondered if they would ever hear from Ontario Hydro as to if, as and when the hydro would ever come back in Lochiel township.

I know the Minister of Agriculture and my colleagues from Cornwall, Prescott and Russell and Kingston, to name but four, were desperately trying to get the information and get it out to the nearly 80,000 people who were out of power for days and weeks and could not get the information from Ontario Hydro.

I want to say to this House, and most especially to my urban colleagues on all sides, can you imagine being out in South Renfrew or North Frontenac or in Prescott and Russell, in 20-below temperatures, having been without power for two weeks, phoning into Ontario Hydro to find out when you might get your power back and being told to call somebody in Markham, where they wouldn’t know Cobden from Kalamazoo, where they wouldn’t know Moose Creek from Moosonee. To be fair to those people, how could they?

People were mad as hell, and they had a right to be mad. They saw the chair of Ontario Hydro pounding the table on day eight of the ice storm, Farlinger saying, “I can’t get the information.” Farmers and rural folks by the thousands were equally distressed when they couldn’t get the information and they waited days and weeks before they got the information.

I say to the Minister of Agriculture, we’ve got and he’s got scores of resolutions from rural municipalities across the region begging Ontario Hydro to put in place a communications system so that if you’re a rural customer, especially in rural eastern Ontario, there will be a better communications network, not just for this kind of emergency but for routine business. The ice storm —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Stop the clock for a minute, please.

Interjections.

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Gilles is waiting for his turn.

The Speaker: Order, Minister. Folks, if you want to meet, can you go into the lobby? Thanks.

Mr Conway: So I say to the House, and to the Minister of Energy especially, those rural municipalities and, more important, those 80,000 rural customers want to know, and they want to know soon: Are we going to see an end to the call centre in Markham? Are we going to have what everybody wants, which is a better, more responsive, regionally based communications network so that in the event of this kind of difficulty in the past, friends from Moose Creek and Calabogie will not have to sit and freeze in the dark and wonder, like Bill Farlinger, will anybody ever tell them when the power is coming back on?

EDUCATION WEEK

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): I would just like to say to the Minister of Education that we’d all love to be able to join in celebrating education in Ontario this week, because there has always been much to celebrate. Unfortunately, we know that this government doesn’t want to celebrate public education; they want to destroy public education in this province. If you want proof of that, just look at what happened last week, with hundreds and hundreds of job layoffs, school closing plans, early education disasters and the loss of special education and adult education. We’ll be grieving for public education next year.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I’d like to respond to the vacuous statement of the Minister of Education regarding Education Week. The minister says that he has limited class size, that he has a more rigorous curriculum and that there will be more class time for students. In fact they have an average class size; they haven’t put limits on the class size. The more rigorous curriculum requires 7.2 credits per year for four years, which doesn’t work out to the 30 credits required for a student to graduate from secondary education. How does that work? And more class time simply means fewer teachers with more students, which means less individual time per student with the teacher. It’s not more class time.

The new funding formula has meant enormous cuts right across Ontario. Just some examples: the Limestone district school board in Kingston and area — 40 support staff already laid off; 88 secondary and 35 elementary teachers to go. Ottawa-Carleton issued 605 layoff notices last Friday, mostly to custodians, school office staff and central office staff, but also to social workers, psychologists and teaching assistants as part of a \$4-million cut to special education. This is a government that says that it wants to help students.

Peel has issued 400 layoff notices to teachers. Halton last week issued 272 notices to instructional assistants in elementary and secondary schools. Schools are being closed right across Ontario: 35 schools proposed for closure in Niagara; 120 schools proposed for closure in Toronto; 20 schools proposed for closure in Ottawa.

This funding formula means cuts to things like libraries in many school boards.

This is a government that says they've maintained classroom expenditures. The Durham District School Board is cut by \$5.6 million, the Halton district school board by \$3.5 million, the Niagara district school board cut by more than \$1 million and the Peel District School Board by \$3.7 million, which is increased to \$6.3 million by the year 2000-01. The Sudbury district school board is cut by more than \$800,000, the Toronto Catholic district school board cut by more than \$200,000, and at the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, instead of teacher-librarians, each school will now only have a half-time library technician.

This is a government that said it was going to protect classroom expenditures and protect education. In fact they've already cut almost \$1 billion and the cuts continue. This funding formula means there are going to be fewer teachers, despite the fact that the average class size says there are supposed to be more teachers. How is a board supposed to square that circle? Virtually every school board we talked to mentioned how difficult it is to get a grasp on what their funding really is going to be for the coming school year. The ministry's numbers keep changing. They do not coincide with board numbers.

Just today, newspapers reported that the Durham Catholic District School Board will be getting a 2.7% increase, or \$4 million to \$5 million next year, not the 4.54% or \$13 million announced by the ministry. Which one is right? Nobody knows what the figures actually are and they apparently now won't know until almost the end of this month. How is a board supposed to plan for September if it doesn't know what its figures are, even by the end of May?

These boards are having to cut programs for students, they're having to cut classroom education. This funding formula, along with the passage of Bill 160 and Bill 104, puts the lie to the government's position about protecting classroom education in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Algoma, you must withdraw that comment.

Mr Wildman: I withdraw, although — well, I withdraw.

ICE STORM DISASTER RELIEF WEEK

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I rise to respond to the statement by the Minister of Municipal Affairs around the aftermath of the ice storm. Let me just say to him and to the government that while we share the concerns expressed by many around the problems Hydro found itself in with the lack of information, among other things, I want to say today in a very non-partisan way that we generally appreciate and accept the way in which the government has handled the situation in the aftermath of the ice storm, in acting in a way that responded to the concerns that were out there.

I want to raise quickly one concern which is around the matching dollars. I would just say to the minister and to

the government that I hope that their door is open to the communities that are not able to raise all the funds they need, that they will still be there to provide the support that's necessary.

COMPENSATION FOR HEPATITIS C PATIENTS

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I understand the government has just tabled a resolution calling for compensation for victims of hepatitis C. I'm asking for unanimous consent that we have an emergency debate on this resolution immediately following routine proceedings today.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The leader of the third party is seeking unanimous consent for an emergency debate following routine proceedings today. Agreed? Agreed.

DEFERRED VOTES

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Deferred vote on the amendment to the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): We have a deferred vote. A five-minute bell. Call in the members, please.

The division bells rang from 1404 to 1409.

The Speaker: Voting on the amendment by Mr Hampton:

This House regrets that the Harris government has implemented a phoney income tax scheme which, unless it is reversed by the next government of Ontario, will entrench permanently the cuts which are causing hardship for our youngest, our oldest, our sickest and our least fortunate in society.

The first question to be decided is Mr Hampton's amendment to the amendment to the motion.

All those in favour, please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Boyd, Marion	Lankin, Frances	Pouliot, Gilles
Christopherson, David	Marchese, Rosario	Silipo, Tony
Churley, Marilyn	Martel, Shelley	Wildman, Bud
Hampton, Howard		

The Speaker: All those opposed, please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Gilchrist, Steve	Patten, Richard
Amott, Ted	Grandmaitre, Bernard	Parker, John L.
Baird, John R.	Gravelle, Michael	Pettit, Trevor
Barrett, Toby	Grimmett, Bill	Phillips, Gerry

Bartolucci, Rick
Bassett, Isabel
Beaubien, Marcel
Boushy, Dave
Bradley, James J.
Brown, Jim
Castrilli, Annamarie
Clement, Tony
Conway, Sean G.
Cullen, Alex
Cunningham, Dianne
Danford, Harry
DeFaria, Carl
Doyle, Ed
Ecker, Janet
Elliott, Brenda
Eves, Ernie L.
Fisher, Barbara
Flaherty, Jim
Ford, Douglas B.
Froese, Tom
Galt, Doug

Guzzo, Garry J.
Hardeman, Ernie
Harnick, Charles
Harris, Michael D.
Hodgson, Chris
Hudak, Tim
Johns, Helen
Johnson, Bert
Johnson, David
Kennedy, Gerard
Klees, Frank
Leach, Al
Leadston, Gary L.
Marland, Margaret
McLeod, Lyn
Miclash, Frank
Munro, Julia
Mushinski, Marilyn
Newman, Dan
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Palladini, Al

Preston, Peter
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramsey, David
Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Runciman, Robert W.
Ruprecht, Tony
Sampson, Rob
Shea, Derwyn
Skarica, Toni
Smith, Bruce
Spina, Joseph
Sterling, Norman W.
Stewart, R. Gary
Tilson, David
Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Villeneuve, Noble
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wood, Bob
Young, Terence H.

Ford, Douglas B.
Froese, Tom
Galt, Doug
Gilchrist, Steve

O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Palladini, Al
Parker, John L.

Witmer, Elizabeth
Wood, Bob
Young, Terence H.

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 27; the nays are 62.

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

Mrs Elliott moves the adoption of the throne speech.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1422 to 1427.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time to be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Bassett, Isabel
Beaubien, Marcel
Boushy, Dave
Brown, Jim
Clement, Tony
Cunningham, Dianne
Danford, Harry
DeFaria, Carl
Doyle, Ed
Ecker, Janet
Elliott, Brenda
Eves, Ernie L.
Fisher, Barbara
Flaherty, Jim
Ford, Douglas B.
Froese, Tom
Galt, Doug
Gilchrist, Steve

Grimmett, Bill
Guzzo, Garry J.
Hardeman, Ernie
Harnick, Charles
Harris, Michael D.
Hodgson, Chris
Hudak, Tim
Johns, Helen
Johnson, Bert
Johnson, David
Klees, Frank
Leach, Al
Leadston, Gary L.
Marland, Margaret
Munro, Julia
Mushinski, Marilyn
Newman, Dan
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Palladini, Al
Parker, John L.

Pettit, Trevor
Preston, Peter
Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Runciman, Robert W.
Sampson, Rob
Shea, Derwyn
Skarica, Toni
Smith, Bruce
Spina, Joseph
Sterling, Norman W.
Stewart, R. Gary
Tilson, David
Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Villeneuve, Noble
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wood, Bob
Young, Terence H.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 10; the nays are 78.

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

We will now deal with Mr McGuinty's amendment to the motion.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1413 to 1418.

The Speaker: All those in favour of Mr McGuinty's motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic
Bartolucci, Rick
Boyd, Marion
Bradley, James J.
Castrilli, Annamarie
Christopherson, David
Churley, Marilyn
Conway, Sean G.
Crozier, Bruce

Cullen, Alex
Grandmaître, Bernard
Gravelle, Michael
Hampton, Howard
Kennedy, Gerard
Lankin, Frances
Marchese, Rosario
Martel, Shelley
McLeod, Lyn

Miclash, Frank
Patten, Richard
Phillips, Gerry
Pouliot, Gilles
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramsay, David
Ruprecht, Tony
Silipo, Tony
Wildman, Bud

The Speaker: All those opposed, please rise one at a time to be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic
Bartolucci, Rick
Boyd, Marion
Bradley, James J.
Castrilli, Annamarie
Christopherson, David
Churley, Marilyn
Conway, Sean G.
Crozier, Bruce
Cullen, Alex

Grandmaître, Bernard
Gravelle, Michael
Hampton, Howard
Hoy, Pat
Kennedy, Gerard
Lankin, Frances
Marchese, Rosario
Martel, Shelley
McLeod, Lyn
Miclash, Frank

Patten, Richard
Phillips, Gerry
Pouliot, Gilles
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramsay, David
Ruprecht, Tony
Silipo, Tony
Wildman, Bud

The Speaker: All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Amott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Bassett, Isabel
Beaubien, Marcel
Boushy, Dave
Brown, Jim
Clement, Tony
Cunningham, Dianne
Danford, Harry
DeFaria, Carl
Doyle, Ed
Ecker, Janet
Elliott, Brenda
Eves, Ernie L.
Fisher, Barbara
Flaherty, Jim

Grimmett, Bill
Guzzo, Garry J.
Hardeman, Ernie
Harnick, Charles
Harris, Michael D.
Hodgson, Chris
Hudak, Tim
Johns, Helen
Johnson, Bert
Johnson, David
Klees, Frank
Leach, Al
Leadston, Gary L.
Marland, Margaret
Munro, Julia
Mushinski, Marilyn
Newman, Dan

Pettit, Trevor
Preston, Peter
Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Runciman, Robert W.
Sampson, Rob
Shea, Derwyn
Skarica, Toni
Smith, Bruce
Spina, Joseph
Sterling, Norman W.
Stewart, R. Gary
Tilson, David
Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Villeneuve, Noble
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wilson, Jim

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 62; the nays are 28.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It is therefore resolved that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To the Honourable Hilary M. Weston, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has addressed to us.

Just a note. The motion that will be debated following routine proceedings will be delivered before we actually

get into the debate, so you should be receiving it between now and when the debate takes place.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): That would be helpful.

The Speaker: That's why we're going to do it.

ORAL QUESTIONS

WATER EXTRACTION PERMIT

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Your ministry has signed an agreement with the Nova Group in Sault Ste Marie to sell 600 million litres of water per year to Asia. This is the first agreement of its type signed by any jurisdiction in North America. This agreement has been slammed by the US State Department, the Canadian Minister of External Affairs and the Minister of the Environment, among others. We understand that this also may breach a number of national and international treaties, according to the Great Lakes commission.

Most Ontarians believe it is fundamentally wrong for you to sell our water, one of our most basic resources, one of the most essential resources of this province. We do not think the future of this province should be up for sale for private profit and greed as a result of the incompetence, in agreeing to this deal, of your ministry.

I want to ask you simply, Minister, were you aware of this deal before it was signed, and do you agree with it?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I'm very concerned with the export of Ontario's water resources and any diversion from the Great Lakes. I want to make it clear that my ministry does not issue permits to export and sell water. My ministry does issue permits to take water. Clearly the matter of the exporting of water is a matter of federal jurisdiction.

Mr Agostino: Minister, you have given a permit to a company to take this water and export it. It's that simple. Do not try to pass the buck. It was your ministry that you're responsible for and you did this without any consultation.

I have the application that was submitted by the ministry. Here's what some of the answers were.

Question: "Pre-application consultation with the Ministry of the Environment?" The answer: "No."

"Environmental study report?" The answer: "No."

"Preliminary report?" The answer: "No."

"Design report?" The answer: "No."

"Final plans and specifications?" The answer again: "No."

This was the application that your ministry approved. You didn't ask for the information, you did no background, you did no environmental assessment on this.

This is a sweetheart deal. It has been negotiated in the back rooms by your ministry. You were not even aware of it, according to what you said publicly. I find it absolutely

amazing that such a precedent-setting deal that could put this province and this country at stake could be signed.

Minister, will you do the right thing today and eliminate this agreement, get out of it and get Ontario, with some credibility, out of this whole mess that you've gotten us into?

Hon Mr Sterling: Notification of this application for permit appeared on the environmental registry for a period of 30 days. There was notice to the public. There was notice to everyone in the province of Ontario through the environmental registry. There was notice to anyone who viewed the registry that in fact it was there.

Under our Ontario law, the director must consider the environmental consequences of issuing a permit. His particular evaluation of it was that the removal of this water did not have dire environmental or any environmental consequences on the people of Ontario, and therefore the permit was issued.

Mr Agostino: I find it amazing that you would stand up and actually say what you just said, that there was no environmental impact. You didn't ask the questions, Minister. Your own report says that there was no environmental study report submitted, that there was no preliminary report, that there was no water quality report. How can you stand there as the minister responsible for the environment and suggest that this has gone through some process of assessing the environmental damage and impact when very clearly in your own document there's no such thing done? The answer was no.

Minister, you've crossed the line here. Is there anything sacred left that your ministry and your government are not willing to sell for the sake of a buck here? Is there anything at all that Ontarians can feel secure about that you're not willing to give away?

Again, this is the report; this is the application you have signed. I ask you, for the sake of Ontarians and for the sake of the future of our credibility, and not to open the floodgates to basically selling off our greatest asset. Will you do the right thing today, Minister? Follow my lead. This is the document. Rip it up, as I have now, on behalf of the people of Ontario. Fail to do that and you have shown the greatest level of neglect of any minister in the history of the province.

Hon Mr Sterling: My director followed the policies, regulations and laws of this province, the laws as they were in the previous government and in the government previous to that. This is the first instance that I have knowledge of where there has been an effort on the part of an individual to sell or export —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question? Sorry, go ahead.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Hamilton East, come to order. Member for Ottawa West, you're not in your seat.

Hon Mr Sterling: My ministry and the director of my ministry acted in accordance with the law. It is clear that this province does not have the jurisdiction to control the export of water. In fact, that very government the member

represents tried to bring in an act to prevent that. Their lawyers advised them not proclaim that act, nor did that government proclaim that act, because the province does not have the jurisdiction to do that.

TUITION FEES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): My question is for the minister of education. Ontario university students were here this morning to raise their growing concerns about tuition fee increases. They're concerned about the 20% across-the-board increases you're allowing and they're concerned about the sky is the limit increases that are going to come with your deregulation of many programs.

I have here the proposed tuition increases for Queen's University and they are absolutely shocking. If these proposals go ahead, nursing students will be paying 32% more to take their training, education students will face an increase of 55%, almost \$1,800 more, and in medicine, anyone admitted to Queen's will pay \$5,000 more, an increase of 124%. How can you possibly justify these kind of fee increases?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): The universities and colleges set the tuitions and many of them have not yet set tuition fees for the coming fall, so to a large degree any of the tuition fees the member's talking about would be speculation.

But if the issue is one of accessibility, I'm very proud to say that in the province of Ontario there are over 400,000 students at post-secondary institutions in our universities and colleges. That represents a participation rate of over 40%, which is the highest rate in all of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development nations in all the world. We have the highest participation rate right here in Ontario.

Mrs McLeod: I guess this government's policy for post-secondary education is to change that kind of record on accessibility, because giving the universities the freedom to raise their fees to whatever the market will bear is going to make some programs and some universities accessible only to the well-to-do. We are heading right into the two-tiering of our education system.

You are also making university and college generally unaffordable. Every college and university is feeling cash-strapped because of your cuts, and your answer is to tell them to make the students pay more. Don't tell us that the 20% you're allowing across the board is permissive, because every university is looking at having to raise those fees. Trent, Windsor, Waterloo, McMaster, Wilfrid Laurier, Queen's, Carleton, St Clair College, Mohawk College have already decided they're going to have to raise their undergraduate fees next year and that is just the beginning.

When your fee increases are fully in place, you will have raised — just your government — tuition fees by over 60%. Students are already experiencing sticker shock. They are afraid that university and college are financially out of reach. Will you stop the skyrocketing fees and freeze tuition now?

Hon David Johnson: Again, the member opposite is speculating on what universities and colleges will or will not do this fall. Some have actually set the tuition fees and some have set them well below the kind of figures the member opposite is speculating on.

I can tell you, though, some facts in this whole situation about what this particular government has done, in an unparalleled fashion, to help post-secondary students in Ontario. We have increased the direct student assistance from \$400 million when we took office to over \$535 million today, direct financial assistance to help post-secondary students in Ontario. We have instituted the student opportunity trust fund, a matching fund between the private sector and the government of Ontario, almost \$600 million in funds to help our post-secondary students across Ontario. We have insisted that 30% of all tuition fee increases go to assist students in need, and in 1998-99 that will represent \$80 million. We have increased assistance right across the board.

1440

Mrs McLeod: The reason you're putting any more dollars at all into student assistance, and it is into student loans, is because your tuition increases are forcing students to take out more loans. This is all part of the escalating student debt, and you haven't helped with that debt load. You have cut away the student assistance that would help to reduce the debt. You've even replaced the loan forgiveness program with a capped offering to students that just allows you to meet your bottom line and the students to be left with more and more debt.

I'm asking you to focus on the debt load. Surely you have some concern about the fact that your tuition increases and your reduction in support for students that would keep the debt down is going to leave us with a generation of debt-ridden graduates. Your answer to that in the past has simply been, "Don't worry. We'll allow you to repay your massive debt at a rate that your income allows," and even the banks are now saying to you that your plan won't work, because the debt load is simply too high.

Minister, I ask you again, in the name of reducing debt loads for students, will you stop the deregulation, freeze tuition fees and work with students to make debt loads manageable?

Hon David Johnson: What we will continue to do is make sure that students have access to post-secondary programs. Over 40% of our students have access today, the highest across this planet. We will continue to ensure that our students have excellence in programs in post-secondary institutions and we will continue to ensure that our students have opportunity in the classes that are over-subscribed today, that there will be opportunities for students to excel.

All of the money I have talked about is in the form of grants, direct assistance to the students of Ontario. Never before has there been such assistance to students in Ontario.

Finally, I make note that under the Liberal regime between 1985 and 1990 tuition increases were 35% in our universities in Ontario.

WATER EXTRACTION PERMIT

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question for the Minister of the Environment regarding his decision to put a For Sale sign on Ontario's water. Minister, on the weekend your Premier told Ontario's corporate leaders that they had been there for your government and now you're going to be there for them. I guess your sale of Ontario's water is just another indication that with your government everything in Ontario is for sale, including our water.

You've been quoted as saying that you are concerned about the cumulative effect of these kinds of things going on, so I'm going to give you another chance. It's your government that has given the approval, so here's your chance. Stand up today and tell the people of Ontario that you will revoke the permit, that Ontario's water is not for sale to the highest corporate bidder.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): As I said before, we're very concerned about this particular fact and the cumulative effect of water-taking out of the Great Lakes. That is why I have called upon Lloyd Axworthy of the federal government to relook at the Great Lakes charter and consider the cumulative effect of taking water out of the Great Lakes, to consider this new issue of exporting water out of the Great Lakes to countries other than the United States and Canada.

Before Ottawa, Ontario has been involved in this debate as a neighbouring state to the other Great Lakes states. However, when we get to the export and sale of water outside of this country, that is clearly within the federal government's mandate.

Mr Hampton: Never have I seen such a shuffle as this. Look, Minister, it is your ministry, your government that grants the permits for the taking of water — no one else. Your ministry, your government has granted a permit allowing a corporation to take 600 million litres of water out of Lake Superior each year for export. Your government is the government that's putting Ontario's water up for sale — no one else.

My point to you is simply this: You could today take the public interest into consideration. You could take the interest of all of Ontario's citizens into consideration and you could say: "I'm revoking this permit. This permit is dead." Will you do that?

Hon Mr Sterling: The permit which we have given to citizens of the province of Ontario allows them to take water from Lake Superior. It does not allow them to sell it, it does not allow them to export it. In fact it limits them — *Interjections.*

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order.

Hon Mr Sterling: We're very concerned about this. That's why we're asking the federal government to come to grips with this problem. They are involved with the

export of water, the export of any product from this country. If they want to limit it, they should; in fact we will encourage them to do so.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Minister, let me say to you, you don't have to rely on a weak-kneed Liberal government. It is up to you to take responsibility for this issue now. What do you think they're going to be doing with that water?

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): How many Liberal members in Ontario?

Ms Churley: It's that Liberal government in Ottawa that's about to sell this country out to the MAI agreement. Don't count on them. You take responsibility. What do you think that company wants to do with the water when they take it out, Minister?

There is the Great Lakes charter and, yes, there is a trigger level of 19 million litres a day and this is only 10 million, but there is the spirit of that charter. The United States at least on three occasions when they've wanted to divert water has consulted with both Ontario and Quebec when they didn't have to. It is the spirit of the agreement. You didn't even consult with your Minister of Natural Resources. This is setting a precedent that bodes very badly for us down the road. You take responsibility today, Minister, and revoke that permit. Our water is not to be given away to your corporate friends.

Hon Mr Sterling: I agree that perhaps in the future we need better consultation among all parties with regard to these kinds of matters. That is why I'm recommending to the federal minister that he convene a meeting between the various interested parties under the Great Lakes charter to set forth a more comprehensive policy to deal with these new intrusions into our very valuable resource of water in our Great Lakes. We are most concerned about this and we will take every step that we possibly can to protect this valuable resource.

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COMPENSATION FOR HEPATITIS C PATIENTS

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): A question to the Premier — and I guess the answer to the last question is that this government will rely on a federal Liberal government that's busy negotiating MAI agreements to give away everything else.

Premier, we are a bit puzzled. Last week, we asked your government —

Interjections.

Mr Hampton: Premier, last week we asked your Minister of Health why your government had sided with the federal Liberal government in signing a so-called compensation package for tainted blood that left up to 30,000 Ontario victims without compensation. Her reply was something to the effect that there were consultations

and that in the end Ontario decided that a package was acceptable and Ontario agreed to sign. That's the gist of her comment in Hansard.

Can you tell us why last week your position was that the agreement with the federal Liberal government was okay even though it left 30,000 victims uncompensated and now you've changed your position? Can you tell us the change in mood that you've undergone here?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): The agreement to cover that 1986 to 1990 period of time is acceptable to this government. It was in response to the federal lawyers who had presented that proposal to us, and we found, for that 1986 to 1990 period, that agreement acceptable. However, I think as you have pointed out, while that agreement deals with a segment of those affected with hepatitis C, others were left out of that particular agreement, which can stand quite nicely on its own to deal with that.

On the other hand, I think a number, including our Minister of Health and ministers of health across the country, have expressed concern about two things: ongoing health care costs for all of those infected pre-1986 with hepatitis C and, secondly, compensation costs as well. So while the lawyers can argue the differentiation, we quite frankly think a victim in Ontario is a victim, and we're there to help them all.

Mr Hampton: I wish your government had taken that position 10 days ago. I wish your Minister of Health had taken that position 10 days ago. All of those victims who have been excluded by your agreement with the federal Liberal government would have been much further ahead now and we all would have been much further ahead if you'd taken that position originally.

But I want to be very clear: The Krever commission recommended that without delay the provinces and territories devise statutory no-fault schemes for compensating persons who suffer serious, adverse consequences as a result of the administration of blood components or blood products. You've changed your position, so I want to be clear on your position. Are you giving us your word today that this package is going to be based on compassion? Can we have your word that this is not about legal liability or narrow rules of legal liability, but that it will be compensation to the victims of a public health disaster based on compassion and understanding? Could we have your word on that?

Hon Mr Harris: I don't know why you're talking about legal liability. If all I did was listen to the lawyers, I wouldn't have made the statement and the announcement that I made today. Of course it is on compassionate grounds of people who through no fault of their own, as pointed out by Mr Justice Krever, have been infected with hepatitis C. There will be other legal challenges, and the lawyers can fight that out. There will be intergovernmental battles between our government in the provinces and the federal government.

In the meantime, we have come forward so that victims, I think as was Krever's wish, do not have to wait for that intergovernmental wrangling which undoubtedly will go

on and the discussions among the lawyers which will undoubtedly go on.

Mr Hampton: Premier, there are a couple of words I didn't hear, though. The words I wanted to hear were the words that I quoted you from Mr Justice Krever, and those words are, "...devise a statutory no-fault scheme for compensating persons who suffer serious, adverse consequences as a result of the administration of blood components or blood products." I didn't hear "statutory no-fault," so let me try again.

I want to be assured that any compensation your government would be in favour of would not at the same time or in some other way take away benefits that victims might otherwise receive. For example, I want to be assured that someone who receives compensation wouldn't at another end of the scale lose Trillium drug benefits or wouldn't at the other end of the scale lose social assistance benefits.

I want to be assured by you, Premier, that we're talking here about compensation for tainted blood, and that compensation for tainted blood will not be offset by taking away Trillium drug benefits or taking away social assistance benefits or other benefits that these people who have suffered a great deal might be entitled to. Can you give us that assurance?

Hon Mr Harris: You lawyers can argue all the technicalities you want. We have put our money on the table in a compassionate way to all victims of hepatitis C. I see nothing in our offer that takes away from any of the other provincial programs, including the ones you mentioned.

CASINO NIAGARA

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): My question is for the Premier, the politician who didn't want to have anything to do with gambling revenues during the last election campaign. Your government awarded a \$500-million casino contract in Niagara Falls without first conducting a rigorous and comprehensive background check on the principals chosen for the consortium. Your chief casino regulator, Duncan Brown, is reported to have said that while preliminary background checks were conducted, no in-depth checks are done until the contract is signed.

A half-million-dollar contract involving the operation of a casino which will make hundreds of millions of dollars a year in profits must have a squeaky-clean, extremely thorough, above-the-board process. Premier, why did your government select a preferred proponent for the Niagara Falls casino amid so much fanfare before conducting a meticulous and thorough background check of all partners in the chosen consortium?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I know the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations can respond.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): First of all, Ontario has the toughest gaming regulations of almost any jurisdiction in the world. Clearly, what the member is referring to is an article from the Star. I must say that yes, preliminary

background checks have been done by the Alcohol and Gaming Commission. I might refer the member to the same article which he's really getting his information from, which indicates — and I don't usually like quoting from the Star, but I will — "The Star has interviewed two of the three other bidders in the Niagara Falls contest.

"Both said they felt they were put under a microscope by the Alcohol and Gaming Commission during the bidding process and did not at the time feel that the checks were preliminary."

Those were preliminary checks. The process which has been in place is that once contracts have been signed, a far more extensive, more comprehensive check will take place. The assurance is that if any of the people who applied for any particular position whatsoever in the gaming field don't pass the litmus test, they will not participate.

Mr Bradley: I remember my friend Al Palladini being at the official announcement, my pal Al, and the member for Niagara Falls. There was a lot of fanfare and there was supposed to be a lot of good news, and now we find out that some of the people involved in the consortium may not have the best possible background. I don't know that, but a thorough check hasn't been made on these individuals.

That gets me to worry about your new Mike Harris gambling halls, the so-called charity casinos that you want to force on communities across the province to operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to draw all the discretionary funds out of the community, preying upon the most vulnerable people, the most desperate people and the addicted people in those communities with your new gambling initiatives.

Minister, will you not now admit that the process you have in place is simply inadequate and that you're so busy rushing ahead to get these new gambling revenues to make up for the loss of revenue from the tax cut that you gave for the rich that you've done a bad job of this particular process?

1500

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Let me speak a moment about process here. To the credit of the NDP government when they brought in the casino at Windsor —

Interjections.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: No, listen to this. They at least brought in a process to screen people.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Unfortunately, during that interval, the member for Ottawa West was saying sarcastically, "Why don't you give credit to the socialists for doing something right?" Well, I am. They did. At least when they brought in the casinos in Windsor they brought in a regulatory function that screened people properly. The Liberal government of Peterson brought in the three-day roving casinos at which there was absolutely no screening available at all. At least something has been done.

The reason for this, and in fact you alluded to the charity gaming clubs, is that the police have said they need the ability to regulate these properly. This is all part of regu-

lation monitoring. This is our function, to assure the people of Ontario of integrity in the gaming area in Ontario. This is what this is all about. I assure you, anyone who doesn't pass this litmus test of integrity will not participate whatsoever.

PROVINCIAL PURCHASING POLICY

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My next question is also for the Premier. Premier, you and your government talk a good line about jobs, and I expect you'll do that tomorrow in the budget. But when it comes to what your government actually does, we see something quite different. For example, last week we found that your government had purchased some hats in China and then out of embarrassment you tried to rip the labels out. You were quoted: "Harris said he wasn't ashamed the hats came from China. He said the best quality at the best price is what free enterprise is all about."

Premier, we've done some research. We've discovered you could have had the hats purchased here in Ontario for a better price. In fact, the hats that we found are made by CCM. Maybe you've heard of CCM? Canadian Cycle and Motor Co. You could have had them produced here in Ontario for a lower price. I'm going to hand out one of these hats to each of the members of your caucus today, Premier.

My question to you is simply this: Would you please explain to the workers in Ontario why competitive Ontario products are not good enough for your government? Would you please explain that?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I know the minister wants to respond and I'll give him an opportunity on the supplementary. The minister will respond I'm sure with how proud we are of Ontario industry and business and how much value added Ontario component there is to the initial order of hats that were available for the launch.

But let me say this: Your former leader and Premier of this province went to China to promote trade with China, and now you're telling me we should never buy anything from China. There was Bob Rae in China saying: "It's time to open up to free trade with the globe. That's how we'll benefit. That's the jobs. That's the growth. That's the prosperity." Now you come to us and say, "Oh, but don't ever buy anything that might come from China."

We need to know, are you in favour of global free trade, are you in favour of your Premier and your former leader going to China, or did he just go over there at taxpayers' expense to have a good trip?

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I'll be very interested in hearing the reaction to the Premier's response by the company that's located in Mr Arnott's riding that produced these hats, because I don't think they're going to be very pleased with your answer, Premier.

The reality is that this comes back down to the way in which you are going about creating jobs and the impact your tax cut is having or not having on job creation. Every day we are not only hearing from ordinary Ontarians that

they don't see the benefits of the tax cuts, but we also continue to hear from economists that there's little or no effect on jobs as a result of your tax cut.

The headline in the Toronto Sun today quoting the Bank of Montreal economist says, "Tax Cut Bad Move, Banker Says." Today's Globe and Mail quotes Paul Darby, director of forecasting at the Conference Board of Canada, and he says, "I find the whole argument specious....," that is, the whole argument about the link between tax cuts and job creation.

Your tax scheme has taken billions out of health care, education and other social services and you haven't fooled anyone into thinking it's creating jobs. There's still time to stop the presses and admit your phoney tax scheme isn't working. Will you do that, Premier?

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): What do you suggest? What does the mayor of Buffalo say?

The Speaker: Member for Ottawa-Rideau, would you come to order, please? Thank you very much. If you'd sit up straighter too, I could see you while you're heckling, as well.

Hon Mr Harris: I was very interested on Friday to hear your leader and Sid Ryan saying that the only jobs being created in Ontario were \$6-an-hour jobs, as I was on my way to Chrysler where 1,000 new jobs, well-paying jobs, were being created in this province of Ontario. Nortel is announcing new jobs, Babcock and Wilcox is announcing new jobs, all of them full-time, permanent, high-paying and I might add tax-paying jobs as well in Ontario.

I want to tell you this: Absolutely every economist, including some of those academic, left-wing economists, has said that the economy in Ontario, as a result of the government actions — they may credit other things too, but this government's actions: tax cuts to create jobs, regulations to streamline the process, investor confidence, that that is why in just under three years Ontario went from the brink of bankruptcy under you and the Liberals to leading this nation and in fact leading North America.

Mr Hampton: On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: I think the Bank of Montreal will be offended to learn that they are left-wing economists.

WOMEN'S ISSUES

Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York): My question is for the minister responsible for women's issues. As a member of the Legislature concerned with women's issues, I wondered if you could provide me and the members of this House with information on the program Partners for Change and its role in the community.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): To the member for Durham-York and to members in the House, the Partners for Change program began almost immediately after we became the government.

From time to time, I think all of us are giving names or people come to us to want to make changes. At the Ontario women's directorate, we invited people to become

part of this group. We are still doing that. At this point in time, there are 73 women who are active to advise the government on two issues that are important to us, more so I suppose than others, and that is stopping the violence and women's economic independence.

I should say that for very small amounts of government money, these members, and women in particular, have levered millions of dollars in advertising. For instance, two of the projects we most recently made announcement on here in this House were the Peace Break ads to support us and help us as we try to get information out during Sexual Assault Prevention Month, the You Oughta Know program and another one called Women Entrepreneurs: Making a Difference. Both of these are just some of the projects these partners assist us with in getting the message out and being full partners, not only in their advice but in their money.

1510

Mrs Munro: I received an invitation recently regarding their recognition and I wonder if you could give us information about that.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: I think this is for all members of the Legislative Assembly in that I don't think we celebrate success enough in Ontario, and we certainly don't celebrate the advancement of women in business enough. This last question was a good indication. Women account for more than 50% of the startups in business and create more jobs. In fact, they're responsible in Canada for 1.6 million jobs, new jobs of women entrepreneurs who stay in business for a long time.

Some of our partners will be having a reception to help celebrate. It's on May 12 from 5:30 to 7:30 in room 230 of this Legislative Building. Many of the members, from all parties, attended last year. I hope you will write this down and help us celebrate some of these successes in Ontario on behalf of women who are helping us in our work.

RURAL AND NORTHERN PHYSICIAN SHORTAGE

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): My question is to the Minister of Health. Last week, in response to a question from my colleague the member for Port Arthur about the \$36.4 million your government is supposed to be using for recruiting and retaining physicians in undersupplied areas, you said, "The money is there, it's ready to go; we're simply waiting for people to take us up on the offer."

The real problem with getting this program going lies with you. It lies in the way you've crafted the virtually impossible terms and criteria for doctors to buy into. Instead of providing a critical mass of doctors in a community to maximize access to physicians' services and minimize physician stress, you insist on the bare minimum. Instead of setting a salary for rural and northern physicians above the provincial average, you decreed that it has to be the average.

It's not working. My question to you is: Will you please commit to the House today that you will change the

criteria and meet with representatives from the chamber —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, member for Sudbury, please. Minister.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): I would just repeat part of what I said last week. As you know, there is \$36.4 million available per year to deal with the issue of underfunding and the shortage of doctors. Our government has taken more steps than any other government in an attempt to address this issue. I would say to you that if people are not satisfied with the complement as it has been determined, they have the opportunity to present the Ministry of Health with additional information. The money is there. If they feel the complement is too low, they can provide us with additional information in order to increase that complement of physicians. Presently there are 29 areas that are eligible for this funding. Only one has signed, five have indicated an interest and we haven't heard from the rest.

Mr Bartolucci: That should tell you that your criteria are impossible. People in underserved and understaffed areas would be flocking to your ministry if the criteria were acceptable. I have two points. Will you commit today, first, to ensure that the \$36.4 million per year for each year of three years will be committed by your government to this? Second, we have representatives in the gallery, both inside and outside the House today, who want to meet with you, representatives from the chamber, representatives from municipalities, representatives from FONOM and NOMA, and representatives of family physicians. Will you meet with them today, and will you guarantee that \$36.4 million is committed, not for one year, not for two years, but for three years?

Hon Mrs Witmer: As you know, I have met with many of these groups already. I am quite prepared to meet with them again. I had personally made a commitment to them that we would continue to resolve any of the issues that were creating some difficulties for them. But I would again remind you that we are quite prepared to look at extenuating circumstances. We would encourage them to provide us with additional information if they feel the complement is not appropriate.

I would also indicate that of the 69 doctors who were recruited last year, we were able to ensure that 62 went to northern Ontario. This government has done more than any other government to address the shortage of the doctors in the north, and we will continue to work with all the stakeholders in order to ensure that the appropriate complement is there.

DISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have another question for the Premier. Last week you acknowledged that Bob Runciman did the right thing in stepping aside pending a police investigation. A criminal investigation is now under way, and we understand that that investigation will also focus on the conduct of your staff. We under-

stand, for example, that Guy Giorno and Deb Hutton told people in the media that they wrote the throne speech, so this investigation will be of people on your staff.

I have really two questions: Why is Bob Runciman the only one taking the fall here, and when will you do the right thing and insist that your own staff, the people who wrote the throne speech, take unpaid leave while this investigation is under way?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the government's position has been pretty clear. I appreciate the member's advice.

Mr Hampton: Premier, you might want simply to cast this aside, but I don't think that happens. I want to quote Mr Runciman himself, when he said in the Legislature on November 23, 1992:

"I'd like to think that if my executive assistant, for example, was accused of criminal activity, I would secure my office. I wouldn't allow my executive assistant to go in and rifle the files a few hours before the police launch their official investigation."

Can you tell us what you've done to secure the files in your office and to secure any other information in your office that the RCMP might be interested in in connection with this investigation?

Hon Mr Harris: The RCMP is satisfied.

GREAT LAKES WATER QUALITY

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. A group of citizens from my riding in Huron county have formed an organization which focuses on issues of water quality along Lake Huron. This partnership includes the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority, local citizens, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, and municipal governments. The preliminary studies indicate that although there was minimal bacteria during the testing months, there was E coli with antibiotic immunities in the lake, coming from a variety of sources. Can you please inform individuals in my riding who are concerned about this issue what your ministry is doing to help clean up Lake Huron and the Great Lakes as a whole?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I'd like to thank the honourable member for her question. She has, of course, relayed the concerns of many of the people in her riding with regard to this very serious problem. That is why this particular group, I understand, was formed last year, and they particularly pointed at the agricultural community for creating these water quality problems.

A multi-stakeholder group called SOLVE, Save Our Lake Value Environment, which includes my ministry and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, local Huron county municipalities, conservation authorities, the Huron county health unit and Huron's Edge, was formed last fall and commissioned to study a design to quantify where these bacterial sources were coming from. The final report of this study is expected to be released very soon, May 12, and we hope to learn from those results.

Mrs Johns: Minister, I know that this problem is not exclusive to Lake Huron. In fact, all the Great Lakes should be concerned about this issue. As a result of our concerns, my community will be approaching the Great Lakes Commission on Wednesday of this week. Will you please inform us what the ministry is doing to promote good environmental management practices and how the Ministry of the Environment agenda and activities coordinate with our partners in the municipal and federal governments, the environment organizations, conservation authorities and agricultural communities to achieve better water quality in our Great Lakes?

Hon Mr Sterling: Governments at all levels are trying to balance the environmental concerns and the existence of agricultural operations that are key to the economy of our rural municipalities. That is why my ministry is supportive of the Ontario Farm Environmental Coalition, and I'm pleased to say that more and more farmers are signing on to this coalition.

The coalition has been working on the development of a provincially applied nutrient management planning strategy. My ministry is working along with a number of other government agencies to assist this nutrient management committee. My ministry continues to observe, as well as working on the general problem, a number of significant water quality impacts from things like manure spills. As in the past, we are continuing with enforcement activities, including laying of charges, pursuing abatement approaches as appropriate.

I would like to point out that the Great Lakes are healthier now than they ever have been in the last 25 years, but there is more work to do and we're going to be there doing it.

1520

ONTARIO HYDRO EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): My question is to the Minister of Energy. In the darkest hours of that horrific ice storm in January of this past winter, both you, as Minister of Energy, and senior officials at Ontario Hydro promised the people of eastern Ontario that Ontario Hydro would be conducting a post-mortem to look at, among other things, Ontario Hydro's emergency preparedness and its communication policy.

Can you tell the people of eastern Ontario today, four months after the ice storm, if you have seen or received a copy of the Ontario Hydro post-mortem, and if you have, can you indicate what it says, particularly on those abovementioned subjects?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): I appreciate the question from the honourable member and would say that I have not seen a final copy of a post-mortem that Ontario Hydro and the government of Ontario have promised to the people of eastern Ontario and to all of us.

I lived through, as a political assistant, the horrendous 1985 tornado we had through the Barrie area and through my part of the province in Simcoe county. A post-mortem was done by a number of agencies, including Emergency Measures Ontario, Ontario Hydro, the Solicitor General's office, the health ministry, local health departments, municipal policing etc. That is the process we're going through at this time. Ontario Hydro is one part of that process. We have had a number of discussions along the way, and as soon as the document is available, it will be fed into the emergency measures process, their post-mortem that's under way. I have had a few discussions today with Dr Young, the province's chief coroner, and all of this will come together in the fullness of time. We're eager to get these documents out when they are produced, just as soon as they are produced.

Mr Conway: A post-mortem was promised to the people of eastern Ontario; 80,000 or more of those people literally froze in the dark through the rural counties, and they expect that you and the chair of Hydro are going to be as good as your word and that they are going to see a copy of that post-mortem.

Specifically, they want me to ask you this: If nothing else changes, are you, the minister responsible for Ontario Hydro, prepared to promise the rural people of eastern Ontario that we will soon see an end to the communications policy that Ontario Hydro employed through the ice storm and otherwise, leaving everyone calling an emergency centre in Markham, which, as I said earlier, was shown to be completely satisfactory? Will you commit that Ontario Hydro will be forced to change its communications strategy and that there will be a much more local regional base so that Hydro customers in eastern Ontario won't ever again be forced to do what they were forced to do during that ice storm?

Hon Mr Wilson: I appreciate, in the honourable member's answer, his appreciation of the hard work and in fact the human miracle that occurred over a three-week period of time to get the lights back on in eastern Ontario, where 40% of the power grid was on the ground.

Hydro lines in North America, the big 500-kilovolt lines, are built to withstand 15 centimetres of ice. There were 75 centimetres of ice. It indeed was the storm of the century and perhaps the storm of several lifetimes, and we owe a great deal to all of those workers — local utility workers and hydro workers from Ontario Hydro — working with the army and all levels of government and service agencies to get the lights back on.

When I was there for a number of days during the ice storm, we were all very concerned about local communications. I agree with the honourable member that that's something that can be improved. We're looking to improve and I know Ontario Hydro is looking to improve local communications. People were extremely generous. No one was selfish. All they simply wanted to know was when the power would be restored in their area. It's a reasonable request and we're going to do our best —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question, third party.

RURAL AND NORTHERN PHYSICIAN SHORTAGE

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is for the Minister of Health. I want to go back to the \$36.4 million that remained unspent in last year's budget and which we still have no assurance of spending in the next two years.

Minister, you said in your answer to my colleague's question earlier that you would be happy to listen to a presentation from those who are concerned: those who are representing municipalities but also the physicians. I'd like to call your attention to a letter that was sent to you on January 9 from Dr Michael Sylvester on behalf of the group, entitled "Towards a New Vision for Globally Funded Group Practice Agreements," which details exactly what the problems are with the proposed agreements that your ministry keeps trying to force on people.

My question to you is, don't you read your mail or don't you get your mail? The reality is that you have a very thorough presentation on what is wrong with those agreements and there is no excuse for you and your ministry not to get that \$36.4 million out the door.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): As I indicated before, we are anxious to work with the individuals who are experiencing difficulties, but I think I need to again stress the fact that out of the 29 communities that are entitled to money from this funding, only one has completed a contract with the ministry up until this time. Five are in discussion.

Again, if there is some concern about some of the terms, we have indicated our willingness to work with them and they have an opportunity to present us with additional information.

Mrs Boyd: Minister, that isn't good enough. It isn't good enough for those communities that remain underserved. It isn't good enough for the physicians who have told you exactly what the problem is with your template and why there are not more agreements being signed. It's no satisfaction to the 32 northern communities that are underserved or the 43 underserved communities in southern Ontario, all of which are looking to you for leadership in dealing with this issue.

We know that the fee-for-service system does not work in terms of attracting and maintaining physicians in underserved areas. You have stood up here and told us how proud you are of the progress you've made, yet you also tell us you've only succeeded in negotiating one contract.

Minister, that's not leadership. It's about time you started paying attention to the people who know what is going to work. When are you going to do that? When are you going to actually provide the funding that will ensure that these communities are not underserved?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would again remind the member opposite that we have made tremendous progress recently. We have proceeded further along in this area of underserved communities than any other government. I would remind you that 62 of 69 doctors recruited have gone to the north.

I would also indicate to you that I can appreciate what it is you're saying. I am advised that my staff have already spoken to Dr Sylvester, and we will continue to work with these individuals in order that we can assure that the appropriate services are provided to people in these underserved areas.

1530

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): My question is to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. Minister, you know it is getting to the holiday season; you know it's about gasoline. I think there are a lot of people in Ontario who worry about the price of gasoline, particularly on long weekends.

I know the prices are very volatile and I know you have had some discussion with this before. What are you doing to monitor that on behalf of the province of Ontario this summer?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): As you know, last year I tabled a resolution calling on the federal Liberals to take some steps to investigate gas pricing. Sadly, the Liberals in this House chose not to vote for this resolution, and unfortunately I had to go to the conference without having the resolution of this House. However, at last year's conference that the concerned ministers attended, we were able to force the federal Liberal government to create a working group made up of consumers, government officials and also representatives to address the issues surrounding this issue.

I also met with both the independent gas dealers and industry members and indicated our concern for the Ontario consumer with respect to the volatility of gas prices. Once again, on April 21, I met with the industry and I indicated to them at that time that the volatility of gas prices will not be tolerated. I made it very clear that our government will closely monitor what happens in the industry.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: That's it. That's the answer.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr Rollins: The small independent gasoline stations throughout the province have taken a bad beating in the last little while. A lot of them have been closing. Is that a concern of you and your ministry, to make sure that those small retailers still stay in business?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: It's always been our contention, and has been the contention both of the previous NDP government and also the Liberal government when they formed the government in the province, that this was a federal issue and that the Liberals in Ottawa should certainly take the lead. Sadly, that has not been the case.

The small independent dealers in the province are feeling the pinch. Clearly this new policy of the federal Liberal government in which they are indicating they're going to impose another tax upon the people of Ontario for oil spillage, and making this retroactive, is going to have an

end result of about 3,000 of these independent dealers either filing for bankruptcy or laying off people. This is clearly another tax on the economy of the province of Ontario.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: There was a din of noise around when the minister was trying to speak, and I was wondering whether he said he was bringing in a provincial predatory pricing bill to prevent the gouging of these poor independents in Ontario. Did you hear that or didn't you?

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): That is not a point of order.

PETITIONS

ABORTION

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I have a petition from 91 constituents in my riding. The petition reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury, or illness, and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has the exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

TUITION FEES

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): I have a petition that is signed by 15,000 university and college students in the province of Ontario, demanding a tuition fee freeze. It was provided to me by Wayne Poirier of the Canadian Federation of Students this morning. It says as follows:

"Whereas tuition fees have risen by more than 140% over the past 10 years; and

"Whereas the increases in the cost of living have stayed at 2% per year or less since 1986, while tuition has increased anywhere from 7% to 20% per year; and

"Whereas high tuition fees are a barrier to accessing post-secondary education, especially among students from low-income backgrounds, students with parental responsibilities and students with special needs; and

"Whereas students are now paying in excess of 40% of the operating costs of universities and colleges; and

"Whereas the quality of education, due in part to the erosion of facilities and the increasing of class sizes, has deteriorated;

"We, the undersigned, do hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to implement an immediate tuition freeze."

I'm happy to sign my name in agreement to this petition.

ABORTION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I have a petition from Knights of Columbus council 6361 in Bowmanville, such members as Corry Van Lith, Ken Boone, Frank Lee and others, to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, illness or injury and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

I'm pleased to affix my name to this petition.

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): I have a petition that's signed by a number of residents from Belle River, Woodlee and Essex.

"Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

I've affixed my signature to this.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have petitions forwarded to me by Cathy Walker, who's the national health and safety director of CAW Canada, signed by a members of that union from diverse communi-

ties such as Windsor, Brampton, Hamilton, Cambridge — virtually right across the province. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas each year in Ontario approximately 300 workers are killed on the job, several thousand die of occupational diseases and 400,000 suffer work-related injuries and illnesses; and

"Whereas during the past decade the Workers' Health and Safety Centre proved to be the most cost-effective WCB-funded prevention organization dedicated to worker health and safety concerns; and

"Whereas the WCB provides over 80% of its legislated prevention funding to several employer-controlled safety associations and less than 20% to the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre recently lost several million dollars in funding and course revenue due to government changes to legislated training requirements; and

"Whereas 30% of Workers' Health and Safety Centre staff were laid off due to these lost training funds; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre now faces an additional 25% cut to its 1998 budget, which will be used to augment new funding for employer safety associations in the health, education and services sector; and

"Whereas the WCB's 1998 planned baseline budget cuts for safety associations and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre will be disproportionately against the workers' centre and reduce its 1998 budget allocation to less than 15% of the WCB prevention funding;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the WCB's proposed cuts and direct the WCB to increase the Workers' Health and Safety Centre's funding to at least 50% of the WCB's legislated prevention funding; and

"Further we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the WCB to significantly increase its legislated prevention funding in order to eliminate workplace illness, injury and death."

I proudly add my name to those of these workers.

1540

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I have a petition here signed by a number of Ontarians. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas all schools in Ontario should be safe learning and working environments; and

"Whereas all Ontarians should be assured that safe school programs are in place in all Ontario schools; and

"Whereas a private member's bill has been drafted entitled An Act to Promote Safety in Ontario Schools and Create Positive Learning Environments for Ontario Students, 1998; and

"Whereas this bill will:

"Require all boards in Ontario to design and implement school safety programs, school codes of conduct and anti-vandalism policies;

"Provide for effective early intervention strategies by requiring boards to design and implement anti-bullying policies and by providing boards with the ability to direct psychological assessments of students that they believe are at risk;

"Provide a provincial violence and weapons-free schools policy and allow boards the ability to exclude violent students from regular classroom settings;

"Give police the tools they need by creating a new provincial offence for trespassing on school property and backing it up with real consequences;

"Direct all boards in Ontario to design and implement alternative education programs for suspended and excluded students;

"Require parents to be liable for any damage done to school property by their children; and

"Protect teachers and staff from civil liability;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To pass into law the Safe Schools Act, 1998, as quickly as possible."

I have signed my name to the petition.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I have a petition signed by hundreds of constituents who are very concerned about the provision of long-term-care services in Thunder Bay, northwestern Ontario and the province. They're still very concerned because of the announcement last week which was woefully inadequate in terms of the provision of long-term beds in the next eight years. The petition reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Thunder Bay and district are suffering from serious deterioration in our health care system because of the closing of hospital beds before community services and long-term-care facilities are available,

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make it an urgent priority to provide more long-term-care services in the home and to provide a sufficient number of long-term-care institutional beds and staff in order to restore the standards of health care to an acceptable level."

I'm very pleased to sign my name to that petition.

ABORTION

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I have a petition that's signed by a number of residents who live in the regional municipality of Sudbury. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has the exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

CHIROPRACTIC HEALTH CARE

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): I have a petition that is signed by many people in York region. It relates to chiropractic services. It reads in part:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize the contribution made by chiropractors to the good health of the people of Ontario, to recognize the taxpayer dollars saved by the use of low-cost preventive care such as that provided by chiropractors and to recognize that to restrict funding for chiropractic health care only serves to limit access to a needed health care service."

I'm pleased to add my name to this petition.

PAY EQUITY

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads:

"We are very concerned about the Red Cross pay equity issue. We are asking the three party leaders to put people before politics and come together in a non-partisan effort to resolve the homemakers' services pay equity problem.

"The legislation affects Red Cross differently than any other provider of homemaker services in Ontario and makes it impossible for the society to compete on a level playing field."

I've attached my name to that petition as well.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas approximately 300 workers are killed on the job each year and 400,000 suffer work-related injuries and illnesses; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario continues to allow a massive erosion of WCB prevention funding; and

"Whereas Ontario workers are fearful that the government of Ontario, through its recent initiatives, is threatening to dismantle workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Whereas the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre have consistently provided a meaningful role for labour within the health and safety prevention system; and

"Whereas the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre have proven to be the most cost-effective prevention organizations funded by the WCB;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately cease the assault on the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Further we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure that the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre remain labour-driven organizations with full and equitable WCB funding and that the WCB provide adequate prevention funding to eliminate workplace illness and injury."

That's signed by workers from all over the province of Ontario — Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge.

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): My petition today is from the people of North York, Don Mills and Thornhill. What it's talking about is health care workers and ethical standards. Part of the petition urges us:

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers, prohibiting coercion of and unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary to the dictates of their consciences and establishing penalties for such coercion and unjust discrimination."

CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is trying to impose so-called charity casinos on 44 communities across Ontario as a vehicle to make profits from gambling for government coffers; and

"Whereas these gambling halls will bleed from the communities on which they are imposed the discretionary dollars which might otherwise be spent on goods and services; and

"Whereas the Harris government is attempting to bribe cash-strapped municipalities to accept the new gambling halls by promising to pay a so-called administration fee to operate slot machines in the casinos; and

"Whereas the Harris government is attempting to coerce municipalities into accepting the new 24-hour-a-day, seven-days-a-week gambling halls by suggesting that charities may not receive funding;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon the Mike Harris government to halt the imposition of new gambling halls, so-called charity casinos, on communities across Ontario."

I affix my signature, as I'm in full agreement with this petition.

1550

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I want to correct my own record. I was just outside talking to someone, and apparently in my question this afternoon to the Minister of Energy — I believe I said that the call centre at Markham was completely unsatisfactory. That's certainly what I meant; I meant unsatisfactory. If it was heard to be "satisfactory," I want to correct the record, because certainly my view and that of my constituents is that the Markham call centre was unsatisfactory, and that's the word I want to make clear is in Hansard.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

COMPENSATION FOR HEPATITIS C PATIENTS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): With regard to this afternoon's proceedings, I believe we have unanimous consent of all parties to follow this procedure: (1) that the Premier be permitted to move the motion without notice with respect to the hepatitis C compensation; (2) that the time available this afternoon for debate be divided equally among the parties; and (3) that at 5:55 pm the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and put the question without further debate, and that if a recorded vote is requested, the division bells shall be limited to five minutes. I believe I would ask unanimous consent for that to be agreed upon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it agreed? It is agreed.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I would like to move the following resolution:

That the Legislative Assembly support the Ontario government's call for a compensation package for Ontarians who were infected with the hepatitis C virus through the blood system prior to 1986, and that pending a resolution of federal liability for the contaminated blood problem, Ontario agree in the interim that such new package be funded by Ontario and the federal government on the same basis as the federal-provincial agreement covering 1986 to 1990.

I'll speak briefly, because I think a number of members from all parties will want to speak today. I think the motion is pretty straightforward and stands on its own. We have also communicated this motion by way of press release today, and I think there is an understanding across the province among other legislatures and indeed the federal government that through the cooperation of this Legislature this motion is being facilitated to be debated and voted upon today.

I want to say that following Mr Justice Krever's report, a thorough examination, I think, over the period of a few years — it was day after day; I don't think anybody felt that his examination was anything less than thorough and

exhaustive — he made some recommendations to the Red Cross, to the federal government and to the provincial governments as to how, in his view, given all the evidence he had heard, hepatitis C victims ought to be treated within Canada, both from a health care point of view and from a compensation point of view. It was his hope and his wish and his desire and his recommendation that the issue of compensation would be one that could be dealt with without the courts and having to go through the legal system.

I think the federal government and the provincial governments, through their ministers of health across the country, with the very best of intentions, began to tackle this issue. I might add that this is not a simple issue; it is complicated. I respect that. I respect the fact that lawyers will have given a substantial amount of advice on the implications of 1986 and pre-1986 and will have provided lots of legal opinions and lots of cautions. I can tell you, were I to follow all those, I would not be introducing this motion today and we would not be debating it.

This is an issue that goes beyond lawyers and legal obligations and Krever's recommendations. This is an issue of people who, through no fault of their own, are facing a great deal of difficulty, of hardship, of uncertainty, and we have been asked to respond to this by Krever. We have been asked by our constituents and we have been asked, of course, by the victims to do the right thing.

When the ministers came together, the decision they reached post-1986 really was a collective offer to be made to those victims of hepatitis C who contracted it post-1986 for that 1986-90 period. The issue was not closed. It had not been formally accepted. It may not have been accepted by anybody or it may have been accepted by some and not others. This notion that somehow or other the issue was closed is simply not true. Even for that period of time, to those people who contracted hepatitis C, it was an offer made in genuine good faith by the provinces and by the federal government.

We do not believe, and it's not integral to this motion and this resolution because I think the matter of federal and provincial governments arguing about who should pay — this is a debate that goes on ad infinitum: health care costs; the sharing of it; taxes; who has the ability to pay for what, who doesn't; who has responsibility, who doesn't; who has jurisdiction, who doesn't. Clearly what I have found from talking to Ontarians is that they don't care — that's between governments. It's all their money. They're taxpayers, they are citizens here in Ontario, and they want the federal and provincial governments to work together on these issues. They don't like the arguing back and forth, one government to another.

None the less, clearly there is a fundamental disagreement here among the provincial ministers of health, the provincial ministers of finance and the provincial Premiers, and the federal Minister of Health and the federal Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister of Canada. There is a fundamental disagreement on who is funding health care at what level and who needs to be held accountable.

There is also a fundamental disagreement on pre-1986 compensation. This is not something that's new, this isn't a new announcement by this government. When the previous deal was arrived at that dealt with post-1986 which we were asked to respond to by the federal lawyers and the federal government and the federal Minister of Health, immediately the issue became, "All right, what about this group that was left out of that deal?" That has been on the table, certainly for the hepatitis C victims across Canada, certainly for those in Ontario, certainly for our Minister of Health and for our government.

Here is where we had a difference, and it was very clear to us over the weekend that there was a marked difference: One government felt the file was closed — "Thank you very much, we've satisfied the lawyers and the legal obligation" — and yet across the country, the government of Quebec, ourselves in Ontario, and British Columbia, and certainly representatives of various governments all across the country said: "Wait a second, this file's not closed. There is a group who was referenced, certainly in Krever's report and in Krever's study, and there is a group who through no fault of their own are not covered by that existing agreement."

We believe the offer by Ontario that we're putting forward today, and by way of resolution taking to the federal government, will break the logjam across the country. We are confident it will do that. The last thing in the world we want to do is go alone. We are very hopeful that there will be constructive dialogue. We are very hopeful that at the very minimum, the terms and conditions of the 1986-90 agreement are being extended to those infected with hepatitis C pre-1986. We are putting what we believe — we don't know the dollars precisely, but we are making that offer to parallel that agreement. We estimate the dollars are \$100 million to \$200 million, depending on circumstances and how serious the situations are and how many come forward within Ontario.

I was asked today, and I do not for a minute believe we will end up in this position: "What happens if we're all alone? What happens if there is no federal government?" Our offer will stand. The offer that we've put on the table, if matched by the federal government, will parallel the previous agreement for 1986-90. Those who will know, by way of compensation it works out to about 30% of the compensation money. You will also be aware that the provinces are picking up 100% of the health care dollars when there is liability or fault. In the case of WCB or insurance companies, we expect to recover those costs, if there is somebody that is liable.

1600

Clearly we have been named as potentially liable for part. The Red Cross, as I indicated at the start, is liable. Unfortunately for victims there is not a substantial amount of compensation available there. So it does fall quite practically, if not legally, on the federal government and on the provincial government.

We will, perish the thought, if we go alone, make that offer. We will proceed with what will amount to about 30% of the compensation as Ontario's share. We will do

everything we can, both through legal action and otherwise, to recover on behalf of the hepatitis C victims the other 70% that we believe is theirs.

The package to date in estimated costs is \$2.7 billion — \$1.9 billion from the provinces. That's made up of \$1.6 billion in health care costs and \$300 million in compensation, and \$800 million from the federal government — \$1.9 billion from the provinces, \$800 million from the federal government.

I say to the federal government, if you look at the evidence that is before us, and the lawyers can argue — I'm not supposed to get into the legal arguments, but if you look at the evidence that has been presented, clearly there is a liability on the federal government at least equal to the liability among the provinces. That is my own view, that is not a legal view, from the evidence that has been presented and from what I believe Mr Justice Krever has put forward.

I call on the federal government and I call on the other provinces. I'm prepared to say this: Even with, pre-tomorrow anyway, a \$5-billion deficit in the province of Ontario — there may be some other provinces that would find this monetarily beyond their reach and I say that is up to the federal government to respond to. This is a Canadian problem. The federal government has the lead there. We have responded to their lead. They have failed to move forward with a second, equally as important, part of this package for those victims with hepatitis C.

I am confident that unanimous action and resolution of this in a non-partisan way from all in this House can assist in, as I say, breaking that logjam and bringing the federal government to accept its responsibility. I close with this: I invite and welcome assistance from all members of the Legislature, from all sides of the House, in helping us with this effort. But I have to say, if it is legal action, we are prepared to proceed legally with any means we can find at our disposal — we have lawyers both inside and outside of government looking at that now — if that is required, particularly if it's required to get the assistance that should come as well from the federal government to those victims of hepatitis C, not only in the province of Ontario but indeed across this country.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): It is indeed a pleasure, on behalf of the Ontario Liberal Party, to rise and support the idea and the concept that we believe are the core of the resolution here today, which is very simply, without the legalese to be found in the resolution itself, that the people who were infected, who were poisoned by the official blood system in this country, deserve, in the words of Horace Krever, "compensation without distinction"; whether it be AIDS or HIV infection or whether it be hepatitis C, that there is no legal, moral or other basis to make a distinction between them.

We also see in this resolution, at the core, a very important principle, one raised in this House last week by Dalton McGuinty, the leader of the Ontario Liberal Party, that it certainly would not be sufficient for this Legislature to simply recognize the need for full and fair compensa-

tion but that there had to be action on the part of this Legislature, and particularly on the part of the government, to put forward the funds necessary to enable a response. So we welcome that distinction, I think, which is in this resolution today and which makes it the basis possible for our support.

It is extremely important that we try, on behalf of blood victims in Ontario and indeed across the country, not to make this look like a political football that has been tossed from partisan politician to partisan politician, which I'm afraid it already has the aspect of. Meanwhile, people who suffer from the blood-tainted transfusions, whichever disease, have been waiting. They have waited three years for the Krever inquiry. They have waited as many as 12 years since the point of their infection. So it is with a very, very strong sense that this is an issue which we're called upon, in our duty as elected officials — not so much as party members and not so much as people with conspicuous axes to grind — to do right by the people who have been affected in that fashion.

We look forward to this not being a wrinkle in the ongoing ping-pong game between various versions of "He said," and "She said," but rather, instead, something that will stay true to that basic principle that it is time the victims became front and centre to this debate. It's time that the people, the Jeremy Beatys, the other people who find themselves through no fault of their own unable to depend upon the system that anyone in this Legislature, indeed anyone in the province, could come to depend on: the blood system, the transfusions you receive in hospital and the other emergency medical services we have in this province.

It is vital, I think, that we keep that in front of us, that in the spirit of this resolution we not concern ourselves overly much with words like "pending resolution of federal liability." We know in this House the Ontario government is named on every lawsuit, in every legal action concerning these matters. There is liability in this House and on the part of us as representatives, on the part of the government and the people of Ontario. We choose not to focus on, to dwell on what singling out the federal government in this resolution may mean, because we believe that the government, in changing its position today, has taken a step that public opinion will not permit any of us to get out from under, and that is that the victims will come first.

Similarly, when we look at words like "interim assistance" or "in the interim" that the funding be provided, we don't think that will be used in a fashion to change the nature of the spirit of this resolution and it won't be used to delay or hold back or get in the way of any potential resolution that could be forthcoming in the days ahead.

1610

It is extremely important for the people of Ontario and indeed for the members of this Legislature that we recognize that certain developments have occurred. What we hear — and I again wish to congratulate the Premier today — are words that the people of Ontario want to hear from their Premier when it comes to a matter such as this. These

are the words: that there will be action taken, that the government will support its outlook with responsibility, taking action.

That is extremely important, what we take as the thrust the action which is being taken today. Certainly, to those members of the Ontario public who are infected by hepatitis C, we make that pledge to ensure that this resolution becomes the basis for a solution, that we will engage ourselves vigorously to make sure this is taken up by all levels of government in the spirit we've talked about and that we don't bog down in some of the points which could be taken to be expressly political.

We recognize that the position coming in here was one at least of significant confusion. There were letters written on April 28 where the provincial government expressed its clear satisfaction with what it called a fair and just arrangement. It's very important just to know that what we are talking about today is different; it's talking about a larger arrangement. The Premier calls it a separate arrangement, but it is a substantial change. It is one which we agree with and which we think deserves to be recognized as in the interests of Ontario.

When we look at what needs to be done in future, we realize that now the onus comes on all members of this Legislature to put forward some energy to see this matter to its own resolution. Certainly, those of us particularly concerned with the health field feel very acutely that we have left the people who are victims subject to our due processes, both in legalistic terms, the Krever inquiry, which took such a long time to come to resolution and in the political discussions which have followed. We have tried on a number of occasions, we have had some conversations with the government, we have made our own declaration early in January to look for some means by which, as we said publicly at that time, this could be resolved on a non-partisan basis. Again, the caveats in the resolution notwithstanding, that is the opportunity we see in front of us today.

Justice Krever states on page 1045 of a three-volume report, which took, as I mentioned, many months to put together, "Compensating some needy sufferers and not others cannot, in my opinion, be justified." It is fulsome agreement with that statement that this Legislature is being asked to pass judgement on today, that we cannot justify making distinctions and not making compensation between those who are needy and suffering as a result of this agreement. We would offer to this government our support in being able to make sure that we keep on the road of seeing that hepatitis C victims are front and centre of our considerations, that we don't subject them to any further delay in terms of what can be done.

There's one commentary that we wish to separate ourselves from, from the otherwise fine-to-agree-upon words and positions of the Premier, and that is that somehow we should hold the victims of hepatitis C separately accountable for their access to the health care system. I think if the Premier reflects on that proposition, on that idea — we recognize that isn't tenable, that it really isn't a way to look at this problem, that we would not heretofore, as a

result of this resolution, as a result of anything that was signed by the Minister of Health or by the Premier or by the Krever report or by anything else, deny the sufferers of hepatitis C access to the health system.

I am certain, I am absolutely convinced, that in creating that distinction, in itemizing how much money it would cost, this government and this Premier did not wish for us to have any of that kind of inference. But I think the Premier may recognize that it is not fair to single out what we may do through the health system to hepatitis C sufferers, because it has a stigmatizing effect of saying, "You're a burden in that regard."

I think what we're talking about here today when we speak about compensation is really the principle, the effort of trying to make some small gesture on the part of the public, on the part of the governments of this country, to recognize the suffering and hardship that has happened in people's lives. It is distinct from whatever we can offer by way of the health system. It is a gesture we can make, for example, to people I've met, and I won't name them, who have lost responsible positions, who have tried hard to hold on to their slipping abilities, to be able to keep their memory and their mental functions, be able to keep their energy levels up as they experience cirrhosis of the liver and other things, that we recognize this is a distinct experience they have encountered.

They walked into our health facilities with the trust that all of us wish to have in their function, and they were let down. They were let down because of pernicious diseases that we had inadequate understanding of, because of decisions that were made, which the Krever inquiry explicates on behalf of society. But that is separate and distinct from how we might try to deal with people and their disease.

The Premier may be aware, or may wish to be aware, that many of the sufferers of this disease in particular find that distinction around their health care provision to be very hard to take, because what they're looking for, and what I think your resolution today is a step towards providing, is some recognition of their unique pain and suffering as a result of our official system having failed.

We know where these problems came from. We know we have a role. This is not a case of saying, "The government can fix things." Unfortunately, sadly, we cannot fix things. We cannot give back to the people who have suffered hepatitis C poisoning through the blood system normalcy in their lives. That's not within the power or the purview of this government or any government. That's not what we're being asked to do. We are being asked to recognize that their access to employment has been affected; that their ability to maintain a good quality of life has been affected, has been negated in many cases; that the future of their families has been impacted by the potential that each of the sufferers, each of those infected, operates with: to have a potentially fatal disease in terms of the function of their liver, cirrhosis, and potentially liver cancer.

What we want to do, in mentioning some of the severity of that disease, is recognize who has to be central in this discussion. The sufferers and their families deserve from

the Legislature of Ontario ultimately nothing less than our respect. When we think of the time they've spent between the time until we get a final resolution and the Krever report itself, we recognize that perhaps that has been in some ways lacking. But we wish to come forward from this point and join in what we think is the only acceptable standard of response: that this Legislature will ensure that all those who have been infected will be responded to in an official fashion, as fairly as we can possibly provide compensation, which will recognize the severity some suffer and others perhaps do not but who will need to have some contingency, because the nature of this disease is such that we can't solve even that limited response we can make tomorrow, because this is a ticking time bomb for many of the people who are infected. We will want to recommend that the principles we believe inform the resolution today survive into the actual arrangements we're going to need.

In the spirit of recognizing what has been said today, we'd like to request of the province some recognition for a group that has been left out, and that is HIV sufferers who have been secondarily infected. We think it is extremely important that the federal government did recognize that class of victim in their compensation. It is missing from the provincial plan and it needs to be addressed.

1620

This is the time, fellow members of the House, for us to try and start anew with the blood system. We have a new Canadian blood system starting in September. We cannot miss the opportunity to put that system on the proper footing, on a basis on which the people who need to depend on it can look forward to an acceptance, not just of liability, but of responsibility on the part of whatever levels of government in this country, because that translates into the confidence to allow people to use the blood system in the first place.

If there really is a legacy, if there really is something to be derived from what has occurred in terms of this episode in Canadian history, when the checks and balances in our legal, political, medical and other systems fail, then it has to be that we won't let something like this happen again, that as small as it may seem to the individual suffering that has taken place, we will make that part of our intent.

Our resolution today is to ensure that the safeguards are in place in the future, that we will never again, should that happenstance occur, despite our very best and reinvigorated efforts to counteract it, should it ever happen that someone is poisoned, we won't put them through the kind of delay, the kind of process that I think has exacerbated the lives and the situations of hep-C and AIDS and HIV sufferers in this country. I think it's extremely important that when we're called upon, as we are today, to make our reckoning on issues like this, we're able to sustain this in as non-partisan a fashion as possible.

I want to conclude by congratulating the Premier on the spirit of his remarks, to offer him our assistance in terms of ensuring that this holds on behalf of the people who are out there who require our response, and how we look forward to making sure that in the shortest period of time

possible there is a realistic, fair program to compensate people who have been infected with hepatitis C, regardless of the year in which it happened through the Canadian blood system. We look forward to that being resolved before the advent of the new system. I think that's a challenge everyone in this House can take up, should take up, and for the sake of the society at large must take up.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I'm pleased to have an opportunity to speak on this resolution this afternoon and to say to the Premier that I am glad this government has come to the realization of the repugnance with which the people of Ontario have watched the jousting between the federal and provincial governments about who should take on the responsibility of ensuring that people infected by hepatitis C through the tainted blood system get the compensation that was ordered by Mr Justice Horace Krever.

When the provincial and federal governments agreed to put this matter over to a royal commission, it was understood that the provinces and the federal government would be committing themselves to follow the kind of recommendations that Mr Justice Horace Krever was making, not only with respect to what was going to happen in the future about a new blood system, but what he was going to recommend in terms of compensation.

We were in government at the time and we were very clear that this was a very complex matter, that it was a matter that needed to be looked at in all its complexity by someone with the integrity and the ability to analyse that we all know is there in Mr Justice Krever. That's why our government was prepared to second Mr Justice Krever to the commission. It was a loss to Ontario because obviously we lost his expertise on our Court of Appeal bench during that period of time, and that was indeed a loss to us. Of course, his salary was paid by the federal government, as all federally appointed justices' salaries are, but it was a real cost and a real sacrifice to us and we were fortunate that we had a person of such integrity.

As we discuss this matter today, it is extremely important that we hear the words of Mr Justice Krever about what should happen with respect to compensation. I quote from that report, which was presented on November 26, 1997:

"It is recommended that, without delay, the provinces and territories devise statutory no-fault schemes for compensating persons who suffer serious, adverse consequences as a result of the administration of blood components or blood products."

"I am confident that if the recommendations are implemented, the likelihood that the tragedy will happen again will be markedly reduced. But in our hope for the future we must not forget that a...tragedy did occur. It is for that reason that my first recommendation is for compensation for blood-related injuries incurred in the past or that may occur in the future."

Mr Justice Krever was very clear in the rest of his recommendations that there was a shared responsibility between the provinces, the federal government and the Red Cross, and that that shared responsibility was an important

recognition if we were going to ensure that this kind of tragedy did not happen in the future.

Actions to incur compensation are often based on the issue that if governments or other responsible parties are required to pay compensation for errors they have made in the past, it may give them a bit of a heads-up. It may ensure that these issues are dealt with effectively in the future. But it also is there because people have suffered. People who in good faith accepted treatments that they were assured were safe, that they were assured might even save their lives, find themselves with life-threatening effects not from the original disease, but from the blood that they received supposedly to resolve that disease status.

Nowhere is this more heartbreaking than for families and those who live with haemophilia, because these are people who over the course of their lifetime are faced with the life-threatening consequences of blood that does not coagulate properly. One of the ways in which that disease has come to be treated is through the administration of blood products.

Many haemophiliacs experience the primary difficulty in their lives because of haemophilia itself. It causes a great deal of distress to those who have to live with that problem. Very often they find that they bleed into their joints, that in order to resolve some of the damage they may end up with fused joints. They are often unable to work because of the energy issues that accompany that disease.

To have on top of that all of the effects of hepatitis C infection creates a very miserable prognosis for those who live with the effects of having received tainted blood. Not only do they have their primary disease to contend with, a problem in and of itself, a lifelong, life-threatening problem, but now they have the added problem of an infection which was introduced to their bodies supposedly through the giving of life-giving blood.

Let us be very clear that when we talk about compensation to those who have suffered as a result of the tainted blood in this country, we are talking about accountability. One of the first things that those who discovered that they had been infected with hepatitis C, with AIDS, or with any other effect from tainted blood want is for those responsible to accept the responsibility: not to quibble, as the lawyers are quibbling, about how much liability they have; not to quibble and argue among themselves, that disgraceful display we saw between the Premier and the Prime Minister last Friday, with the two of them arguing at completely separate events about who was most responsible. That does not help the problem.

1630

We are going to support this motion, but we have some very serious reservations about the way it has been introduced and about the premises that the Premier stated it was based upon.

The Premier in this press release today insisted — as this government has, whether it was Mr Wilson or whether it was Mrs Witmer — on including the health costs as part of a settlement. Anyone who is resident in the

province of Ontario is entitled to have their health costs met, according to our programs. For the Premier to claim that Ontario is bearing all the costs for health care for these patients is absolutely wrong. This government is requiring these people, as every other person in the province who may be under the Ontario drug benefit or the Trillium drug plan — and many of these people depend on those plans to have the medications that are required — to pay copayments, to pay user fees. So even his statement that all the drug costs are covered is not true.

It is very serious that we recognize that not only are these people ill, facing the problems that everyone faces when they are ill — of not being able to work, of not being able to give the kind of support to their families that they want to give, of not being able to enjoy life — not only are they experiencing that, but they also of course, because of this government's programs, are having to pay a lot of the costs to keep themselves alive, to keep themselves functioning at whatever level they are able to function.

So when the Premier stands and tells us that the total cost of compensation is \$2.7 billion, and of that, \$1.6 billion is in health care, let us be really clear what he is trying to do. He is trying to hide the fact that the provinces would be responsible for those health care costs regardless, whatever the situation was. That is not at issue and should never have been at issue in talking about compensation for the damage caused by the carelessness of two levels of government and of the authorities who were providing blood services in this country.

I find it offensive. I am sure that every person living with hepatitis C and who got hepatitis from the tainted blood system is sitting out there shaking their head, saying, "How can this be part of compensation?" This is the reality that every province and territory faces as a result of our agreed health care system, of the Canada Health Act, and it is disgraceful to try and put that as part of the package.

Then when we come to the rest, let us be very clear. The compensatory part of this is \$300 million in compensation for the provinces, of which Ontario apparently will have to pay \$113 million, and \$800 million from the federal government.

If I understood the Premier correctly, the effect of his motion would be that for these people who were infected prior to 1986, and I would tell you after 1990, because there are people who have been infected since 1990, he would be prepared to pay — did I hear him correctly? — 30% of the compensation only, put that up front initially, that in fact he's not talking about fronting up all the money that these people need and deserve, but only 30% of that, pending some decision about where the liability really lies.

What we're really hearing here is that of course this Premier and this Minister of Health have been overwhelmed, as all of us in this House have, by the communications we have received from people in our own communities, overwhelmed by the sadness, by the waste that has occurred because of the policies that allowed

tainted blood to be given to hundreds of thousands of people.

It is very clear that public opinion has forced this government into a corner, just as it did with the Dionne quintuplets, just as it has in other areas. To try and maintain their guise of being a compassionate government, a kinder, softer, warmer, cuddlier government, they have had to come to this conclusion that they will go ahead with compensation to some of those who need their help desperately and they will continue to fight it out with the federal government in terms of legalism. That's not very good — it's pretty grudging and it's been a long time coming — but it's better than nothing.

Those who are living with hepatitis C because of tainted blood out in our communities are telling all of us in this Legislature that it's important for us to do something for people like one of my constituents, a sole parent of a young child about five years old, who finds himself in a situation where he has a very seriously enlarged liver. He has become sicker and sicker over the last few years. He is looking at a situation where he now is planning to move so that he and his child will be closer to his remaining family so she can become used to those who will likely have to continue her parenting in a not very long time from now.

His question to me was: "What does it mean? Does it mean the government is guaranteeing me a pot of money that I will be able to set aside for my child's education? Does it mean that I will continue to receive disability benefits to enable us to live together as long as I am able to look after her so that I can feed and clothe her, so we can stay as a family, without having that removed because I have a lump sum of compensation? I'm on ODB, but some of my drugs aren't covered by the ODB so I'm on Trillium for some of those catastrophic drugs. Does it mean I will be able to continue on the ODB and on Trillium so I get the drugs I need, or will I be expected to apply that settlement?" — which I understood to be from anywhere between \$10,000 and \$30,000 a person, depending on how ill they happen to be at the time. "Does that mean that will have to be applied first, that I will have to pay down all my assets?"

He said to me: "I'm not eligible for life insurance. I'm not eligible for disability insurance. I have a pre-existing condition. How am I going to look after this child? How am I going to be able to carry out my responsibility as a parent to this child?"

That's just one story, but there are literally hundreds of people who have those same questions. We don't know the answers, but we do know that the settlement that was agreed to by this health minister and other health ministers across the country is a very legalistic settlement. It requires people to be part of a class action. It requires them to prove to someone's satisfaction what level of need they have, what level of effect it had.

There is no certainty about what the amount will be, there is no certainty that other programs will not stop while those amounts are paid down, and these are ques-

tions that this government must answer before it takes any credit for this resolution.

I know there are many in my party who want to respond to this resolution. I will say again that of course we will support it, but what we have in reservations about what it actually means we will continue to talk about, and we will continue to press this government to make the assurances to those who are living with hepatitis C that what is happening here is not another sleight of hand, another shell game. Because if what happens is that the compensation this province is saying it's going to give these people goes to them and then diminishes their right to social assistance, diminishes their right to access to the drugs that they require through either the Ontario drug benefit or the Trillium drug plan, they will simply have shifted dollars they would have had to spend anyway because people are entitled to those dollars and tried to take political credit for having been generous in their effect.

1640

I hope that I am going to hear from the Minister of Health in the next few minutes that these fears are groundless. I hope we're going to hear a clear commitment from the Minister of Health in response to this resolution, that this is not a trick, that this is not an effort to try and curry favour with the voting population, that it is in fact a genuine, compassionate offer from this government to those who have been infected by tainted blood and that it will not turn around and become an albatross around their necks, forcing them to diminish all their resources in what may be the later years of their lives.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): I'm pleased today to have the opportunity to support the resolution that was put forward by our Premier, whereby the Ontario government calls for "a compensation package for Ontarians who were infected with hepatitis C virus through the blood system prior to 1986, and that pending a resolution of federal liability for the contaminated blood problem, Ontario agree in the interim that such new package be funded by Ontario and the federal government on the same basis as the federal-provincial agreement covering 1986 to 1990."

I would like to extend my appreciation to our Premier for the leadership that he has demonstrated today in response to the needs of those who were infected with hepatitis C prior to 1986. He is the first Premier to do so.

Since November 1997 we have been dealing with the issues that were presented in the Krever report. There were 50 recommendations contained within the report and, as you know, our government has carefully analysed and reviewed the information contained therein.

As a result of our analysis, we remain committed today to the federal-provincial-territorial agreement to offer \$1.1 billion to those infected with hepatitis C through the blood system between 1986 and 1990. However, our resolution today takes us further in that we are prepared to provide the financial assistance as well to those individuals who were infected with hepatitis C through the blood system prior to 1986.

During the discussions that took place at the provincial, territorial and federal levels it was our government that urged that haemophiliacs be included within any package. We were extremely pleased that at the end of the day they were included within the original package, and it would be our intention that they would continue to be included now in the package prior to 1986. Also, we were pleased that those secondarily infected by HIV through the blood system were included in the original package.

I've had an opportunity to meet with many of the families and individuals who have been impacted and who have been infected with hepatitis C through the blood supply. I think all of us who have had meetings with those individuals, and I've heard the other two parties speak as well, have certainly been moved by the experiences that have been relayed to us.

That's why we have come to the conclusion we arrived at last week, that we would call on the federal government to include providing financial assistance to those individuals not only within the window package of 1986 to 1990, but also those who were infected prior to 1986. Today our Premier has indicated very, very eloquently and spoken very forcefully of the need for these people to receive our help, and the indication of our government to provide that help to them.

I think it's important, however, to also remember the commitment that our government has made to health care in this province. It's important to remember that our government has increased its share of financial assistance to the health system in this province from \$17.4 billion to \$18.2 billion this year. It's important to remember that we have done so at a time when the federal government has decreased our transfer payments by approximately \$2 billion.

Our Premier and our government have certainly demonstrated that we are prepared not only to indicate our support for providing the best health services and system for people in this province, but we are prepared as well to provide the financial resources, as we have done today when we have indicated that we have prepared to expand the financial assistance package to those who were infected prior to 1986.

As has been pointed out, the package that was presented during the window period is one that is worth \$2.7 billion. Of the total, the provinces are paying \$1.6 billion to ensure that high-quality health services are available to all of the individuals. The provinces are also paying for \$300 million in direct financial assistance, and Ontario is paying \$113 million of that. The federal government is paying the remaining \$800 million.

It's also extremely important to remember that the provinces, with the federal government, have made a commitment to ensure that there is a future blood system that will provide for a safe and secure supply of blood. It is the provinces that will be subsidizing the majority of the costs that are going to be involved in operating the blood system.

It is our desire today to indicate that we have heard the voices of people not only in the province of Ontario, but

we have listened to those throughout Canada, and we are prepared to call on Ottawa to join us, to join the chorus of Canadians who are calling for justice for all people who were infected with hepatitis C before 1986. I am pleased today to support the resolution put forward by our Premier, and I look forward to hearing a positive response from the federal government and our colleagues throughout this Dominion of Canada.

1650

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): This has indeed been a difficult issue for various levels of governments — those being the provincial governments, the territorial governments and the national government — to deal with because of certain legal problems that have apparently made some reluctant to make the package that has been proposed now as expansive as it might have been. Certainly it is encouraging when we in the opposition raise issues of this kind that the government will eventually respond to that being raised in this House and in other venues.

The government of Ontario has in fact been resisting for some period of time an expansion of this package. Certainly we heard from Clay Serby, who I think is called the chair of the provincial ministers of health — he's the Saskatchewan Minister of Health — and he has indicated on many occasions that all of the provinces, along with the federal government, agreed to a compensation package. It is interesting that it was in fact the federal Minister of Health who was asked to answer questions on this. Of course, the federal House was in session and the provincial House was not in session at that particular point in time, but the federal minister has taken the flak from the news media, from the opposition in the federal House and from others, when it has, all along, been in agreement between all of the provinces and all of the provincial ministers and the federal minister.

I think what the public does not want to see in this regard is the kind of wrangling that has emerged as a result of this package beginning to come apart. In fact, what they're looking for is a situation where governments are working together to find a solution, not one claiming credit or another claiming credit or necessarily one government pointing fingers at others, because if we look back in the history of this, some of the significant opposition to an expansion of this package in any way indeed to the package which was arrived at has come from various provincial governments, including this provincial government.

I have a letter here dated April 28, 1998, from Health Minister Witmer, which was written to one of my colleagues, Alexander Cullen, Ottawa West. It says the following:

"Dear Mr Cullen:

"Thank you for your letter on behalf of people in your community about financial assistance for people infected with hepatitis C through the blood system.

"As I am sure you are aware, the federal, provincial and territorial ministers of health have agreed to offer financial assistance to Canadians infected with the hepatitis C virus through Canada's blood system between Janu-

ary 1, 1986, and July 31, 1990. Our governments have set aside up to \$1.1 billion for this assistance package, of which Ontario will provide up to \$113.1 million.

"Coming up with a fair assistance package was difficult and complex. We recognize that many people put their trust in the blood system and Ontario's participation in this national assistance plan is a major step towards helping them.

"I am deeply sympathetic to those who may have been infected with hepatitis C before 1986 and I can understand their disappointment in not being included in this offer of assistance. However, even governments are limited in the help they can provide and we cannot correct or remedy every harm suffered by individuals.

"I believe that we have taken a fair and just approach in reaching agreement on this package of financial assistance.

"Once again, thank you very much for writing me about this important issue."

It's clear from this response and from the response in the House last week that the position of the government was that it did not want to expand that package. What happened was, in the Quebec House the Liberal Party moved a motion asking that this issue be reopened. Mr Johnson moved a motion — as the new leader, of course, I'm sure Mr Charest, the former Conservative leader federally, would be supportive of that — in the Quebec National Assembly, asking that it be reopened, that the federal and provincial governments go back to the table to reopen this particular set of negotiations.

Lucien Bouchard, if nothing else, is no fool, and he sees every chance as an opportunity to stick it to the federal government, so he had a good plan. He said, "Let's do that, but I'll amend the motion and we'll simply say the federal government should do it." That seemed to be very attractive to some in the provincial government, because I heard the Premier and some others, including the Minister of Health, say: "Gee, that sounds like a good idea. We'll point the finger to Ottawa. They can assume all the costs of this additional package, and we will look good because we are saying that should be done, that the package should be expanded."

So one becomes a bit cynical when we see the history of this; when we see that Mr Jim Wilson, when he was minister, resisted a discussion with those in the Haemophilia Society about compensation; when this government seemed to be dragging its feet on this package when there was an attempt to come up with a package even for those within the confines of the limitations I've already mentioned.

I guess what I find most difficult is for those who are not known for compassion and for the willingness to spend money to be the prime advocates of it, and that is the Reform Party of Canada, to which some people in this House may belong. To see the Reform Party up in the House demanding a compensation package and government expenditure was truly laughable when we know where the Reform Party stands on expenditures.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: I don't point the finger at you; I simply say this is inconsistent with the image. When governments or parties portray themselves as parsimonious, portray themselves as hardheaded on fiscal matters, and then suddenly make a change in their policy and a change in their approach, you will forgive me, I'm sure, for being just a bit cynical about the motives that are emanating from that.

I want to say to those who will play footsie with the PQ and Lucien Bouchard on issues of this kind that you must be very careful. You go down a dangerous path. There are some who believe that other provinces in this country secretly cheer on Lucien Bouchard as he demands more provincial powers, as he demands to secure more powers for his province, because they feel they can tag on to those demands, or at least, if those demands are accepted, they will accrue to those provinces as well. I say to everyone who looks at Lucien Bouchard and his desire to seek compensation, you should see that there might just be a political motivation in it.

As I mentioned previously, I don't think people in this province or anywhere else have looked forward to the on-upmanship and the trickery and the show that has gone on in other jurisdictions, I think particularly in the House of Commons, over this. What we are talking about are people in a very unfortunate circumstance, unfortunate due to nothing they have done themselves — extremely unfortunate. They have contracted hepatitis C, which eventually in most cases will have a very devastating effect on their personal health.

For those of us in this House who gather together, as the member for London Centre, the NDP critic, and the member for York South, the Liberal critic, have had to say, even looking carefully at the detail, because the devil is often in the detail, this resolution, agreed upon by the three parties, called for by the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party earlier this week in this House, will at the very least allow this to be placed back on the table. Hopefully negotiations will be recommenced by the federal ministers. I know calls will go to Clay Serby, the Saskatchewan minister, to ask him, in his capacity as the chair of the health ministers of Canada, if he and the federal minister, Mr Rock, can convene a meeting of all the ministers to come to an agreement.

One must remember that the provincial governments cannot be allowed to get away with counting as their part of the compensation package — I think as put most appropriately by the member for London Centre — that which they would normally cover in any event as a result of the health care system we have in place.

I think this Legislature this afternoon, by voting for this resolution, although it may be flawed in certain ways, I believe will express a multiparty viewpoint that we wish to see hepatitis C victims compensated.

I want to thank the Premier for responding to the opposition and responding to others in our society who have called upon him to not wrangle with the Prime Minister of Canada but rather join with the federal government and other governments in providing the kind of compensation

which is appropriate for individuals who have been afflicted with hepatitis C.

1700

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I am pleased to have an opportunity to participate in this important debate. As I said earlier today, I feel very strongly that the government is proposing to do the right thing. That is most important in the lives of those victims who were infected with hepatitis C from the blood system prior to 1986 and would have otherwise been left completely out of the compensation package that had been negotiated and agreed to by the federal government and the provincial governments.

I also said earlier, and I feel a need to repeat, particularly after hearing the government's contribution to the debate so far, that the level of cynicism with which people must view these actions I can only imagine is as high as mine is, and mine is very high.

I watched the successive ministers of health for months refuse to participate in any package and do all the finger-pointing at the federal government: "There should be a package, and it should be the federal government that does it." Jim Wilson was very clear: "No" was the answer. Liz Witmer was very clear: "No" was the answer at first. Even on the eve of the federal-provincial negotiations, "No" was the answer.

Then an agreement came out and we started to ask questions. My leader last week, I think it was on Tuesday or Wednesday, asked her: "You made a commitment. You promised all hepatitis C victims that they would be compensated. Why have you gone back on your word and why do you not push for opening up this agreement and including the pre-1986 victims?" Her answer was really clear. She didn't think there was a responsibility or a liability: "I feel sorry for the folks, but it ain't our job, man. There isn't a legal liability there, so we're not going to do it."

The next day on CFRB — there's a bit of public pressure mounting on this issue — she says: "We think the deal should be reopened, but it's the federal government that should pay for it. Don't look to us; not the province. Let's point fingers. Let's fight all the grievances, legitimate as they may be, against the federal government cut in transfers to health care. I agree there are legitimate grievances on that, but let's fight it out in this arena." How cynical can you be, exploiting these people and their lives with respect to that? I was shocked to hear that. Then the next day she gets on the phone with the ministers of health from the other provinces and comes out and yet again agrees to the package as it was constituted, to exclude the pre-1986 victims.

The next day the Premier gets into a dust-up with the Prime Minister at the Chrysler announcement and there's all this finger-pointing going on. You can always tell when you're moving into a pre-election period because the government of the day always points a finger at the feds. There we were again. In the most cynical of ways, that's what the Premier was doing.

Today, I think because there was a lot of negative public reaction, we see the Premier make an announcement — I will say again, they are proposing to do the right thing, but we have a lot of questions. The Premier never acknowledged any of that history in his comments. He essentially said they were going to do the right thing for these people and they'd go to the feds and get the money afterwards. The minister spent all her time talking about all the wonderful things they're doing and money they're spending in health.

Neither of them answered the key questions that our leader, Howard Hampton, and our health critic, Marion Boyd, have put with respect to this package. For instance, if a person, because of their illness, has been out of employment and has ended up on social assistance, must they use up all this compensation package before continuing to be eligible for social assistance or for the drug benefit card that is part of that? If they are currently, before receiving the compensation, in a financial circumstance such that they would be eligible for the Trillium drug plan, will they remain eligible, or will they become ineligible because of this compensation package?

I have to say that these are very important questions. When this issue first broke, the story of this broke, a number of years ago, and I was health minister, we had to make some decisions with respect to the compensation for AIDS victims, about passing through this compensation. We decided very clearly that people should not be responsible, to have to use up the compensation before being entitled to other benefits they would otherwise be entitled to.

We deserve, the public deserves, most importantly the hepatitis C victims who became infected prior to 1986 deserve, a clear answer from this government. Let's stop wavering. Let's find out if there will be a statutory plan, a no-fault plan, a plan which gives people appropriate compensation based on compassion, not on narrow lines of legal liability. Let's see if this government lives up the recommendations of Justice Krever. We hope they will. We will continue to push to ensure this government does that.

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): I am very pleased to stand in the House today to speak in favour of this resolution; in fact, my first opportunity in this particular session of the House, since we began this past week, to speak to a resolution or a bill, and I think a moment one will remember in terms of entering important debates, resolutions, that I will take back as particular memories of my time here in the House.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): That indicates you don't think you are going to be here after the next election.

Mr Hudak: Or maybe the beginning of many memories here in the House and one to build upon.

This compensation package will extend that for those who were infected by hepatitis C from 1986 through 1990 to those who were infected before 1986. It is a moment I will commit to memory as a proud Canadian and a proud Ontarian, because I certainly see here my province strong again, my province confident again, and my province once

again ready to take a leadership position among the other provinces across this country; in fact, a leadership position ahead of the federal government, pulling them towards a solution of fundamental justice, a strong province that I think will set the tone for other provinces across this great country.

I expect a resounding vote in this Legislature momentarily when we get to that vote soon in the day, a strong voice coming from Ontario, a voice and a vote that will echo across the provinces, because I certainly expect this resolution to be the first among many other resolutions or commitments from the other provinces to try to move the federal government along. I think that voice will be heard from coast to coast, and I think finally we can move the federal government to action on this. I am pleased that I can anticipate, I think, all-party support in this House on this resolution. I would expect most of the members here, as well, if not all, who I see, to support this motion.

I hope as well that the resolutions I expect from other provinces will, like ours, extend the same basis of the compensation package to those who are pre-1986 as those who exist for 1986 through 1990.

I know that many government lawyers, whether in Ontario or with the federal government, in Quebec, British Columbia or Newfoundland, may argue against it, and maybe they do have some strong legal arguments or reservations why they wouldn't extend the compensation package to the hepatitis C victims before 1986, but it's our job as legislators to put that advice from the lawyers into balance with other issues like compassion, other issues like the concept of what is fundamentally just in a country like Canada. We see here today in this resolution that compassion wins out in Ontario, that fundamental justice will be the victor in these chambers in this resolution today.

Ontario will not stand idly by — a strong province, a province prepared to take leadership among the others — while the federal government refuses to act. These people need help and they need help desperately. We need to respond to this fundamental justice call, and Ontario is prepared to do our part to help them out. We will be providing assistance for those persons infected before 1986 on the exact, same basis as those infected between 1986 and 1990.

As I've said, I expect other provinces to follow suit, to help us, with Ontario in the lead, and I expect soon the other provinces to join and to push an intransigent federal government to respond. Surely the local MPs are receiving phone calls in their offices, surely they are receiving and reading the letters to the editor, surely they are feeling the strong sentiment among the general public that what they have done is not good enough, has not gone far enough. They continue to ignore those before 1986 and they are wrong. Surely they must hear this. When they hear Ontario and Ontario's MPPs speaking loud and speaking strongly and saying, "We will take that leadership if Jean Chrétien and his federal Liberals refuse to do so," I think we will force them to act. As the Premier said, if they do not act, Ontario will act. But I certainly expect, with

Ontario, and if other provinces join in, that the federal government will have to budge, that the Rock will have to crumble, that they will move on.

I expect the first thing their counterparts across the floor, the Liberal Party in Ontario, will do when they finish the debate today is to call their colleagues in Ottawa, the — what is it now? — 102 or 103 members, to let them know. The strength of the Liberal vote in Ottawa comes from the province of Ontario, and here they will hear Ontario speaking very loudly, very strongly, with a voice of compassion, a voice of fundamental justice, to say, "Help those victims," and surely with that vote and with the help of the members opposite to call their colleagues, who I know are very close on all the issues, to budge them as well, to get them to change their vote.

1710

It must have been very difficult — you read of one Liberal MP breaking into tears as she had to vote in favour of the motion as Chrétien cracked the whip and forced them to fall into line — to reject the pleas of those infected before 1986. I understand the NDP federally, as I read in the papers today, is considering bringing another motion to the floor to test again whether the Liberal members there will represent the views of their constituents and respond to this issue, represent the views of Ontario and the other provinces, or will they follow through and respond again to the crack of the whip from their health minister or their federal leader?

But I think when you hear the strong province of Ontario, again leading the nation in job creation, speaking out so resoundingly in favour of bringing the compensation package in line, the federal government should have no choice but to respond. I can expect the member for St Catharines to get on the phone and speak with Walt Lastewka tonight, I would hope, to tell him he should change his vote, as should the other ones in the Niagara Peninsula and throughout Ontario.

One remembers too, I think, at moments in this debate some of the faces. I heard other members speak about this earlier today. They spoke about the faces of those who have come in contact with them, come to their office to talk about how hepatitis C or HIV has affected them and affected their lives.

I was recently speaking in my constituency office with a man in the Niagara Peninsula whose daughter, now a young woman, as an infant was infected with hepatitis C through no fault of her own. She is otherwise a healthy normal student enjoying life to the fullest, enjoying the everyday adventures and trials and tribulations of any average young woman at this time of year; in fact, I would think as a student in late May checking the clock and checking the time to see when summer will arrive for a whole new range of adventures and challenges and tribulations. But at the same time, she is a young woman slightly different from her classmates, because as well as looking forward to the summer or to her other exciting adventures that may be coming up, she is looking forward, I suppose, or not looking forward, to another doctor's

check to see how she's doing, to test her health, to check for many effects of hepatitis C.

I understand, to date, she has been very healthy, continues to be very healthy, and of course we wish for her continued good health. She is an individual maybe not considered, not weighed in those lawyers' arguments, but an individual who must be considered as we sit in this House and debate this issue today, to put that into balance, an issue of compassion and fundamental justice with lawyers' arguments as well, to bring forward this resolution that speaks strongly on behalf the citizens of Ontario to move the federal government to action as well.

We've been challenged to put our money where our mouth is, I believe were the Prime Minister's words. Indeed, you can see that we have acted, calling on the federal government to act, and acting not only in this case, the hepatitis C package, but acting in many other ways. Of course, it's challenging with federal transfers being slashed these past few years by \$2 billion to health care and education, the challenge to meet the needs and the demands of the citizens of Ontario for the best health care system in the world.

Not only this resolution today, but in addition to this compensation, they announced recently \$2.1 billion, I believe it was, for long-term care. Not since 1988 had there been any additional beds brought forward for long-term care, and you're going to see 20,000 new beds across the province. Again, issues of compassion and justice, and new investments in home care for services like Meals on Wheels and friendly visiting and respite care show how this government is responding to the needs of its citizens, in the health care field especially. Cardiac care as well: more operations and declining waiting lists, down about 29% in terms of the time to get that vital surgery. Again, a government prepared to put its money where its mouth is.

We made a commitment to ensure that health care spending would stay the same and we would meet the demands, and we are meeting the demands of Ontario's citizens. In fact, we've increased that health care spending from \$17.4 billion to over \$18.2 billion this year. We are making a similar commitment to those who are suffering from hepatitis C infected before 1986, that they will receive the same scope of justice as those who were infected between 1986 and 1990.

There's some irony too in my colleague the member for St Catharines's comments, saying there was some lack of sincerity, I suppose, in the position across the floor here or with the Reform Party of Canada, but I think a mistake as to what Conservative values mean, Conservative values calling for accountability in the way the taxpayers' money is spent, making sure good use of tax dollars comes out through taxation, issues that would be supported by the taxpayers of Ontario.

Tax dollars and spending should respond to issues of fundamental justice. That's what Conservatives understand. That's the compassion of a Conservative. We can make the tough decisions early, make the tough decisions to get rid of waste and duplication after years, in fact a

decade of lost years, of overspending by the Liberal and NDP governments, so that we would have the funds —

Mr Wildman: Oh, come on. What's this got to do with hepatitis C?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Order, please. The members for Algoma, St Catharines and Dovercourt, come to order.

Mr Hudak: — to address the needs of priority areas. If we didn't make those decisions, one wonders if we would have the ability to respond so quickly and to lead other countries.

As a strong and growing Ontario, an Ontario showing leadership once again, because we've made the difficult calls, because we have the ability, the compassion and the feeling of fundamental justice to address these issues, I stand in strong support of this resolution. I'm confident the members in this chamber feel the same way. We call on the other provinces to help us, to come into the leadership position with Ontario and pull the federal government to action to extend the same compensation package, the same natural justice, to those infected before 1986 as to those who were after.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I rise to support the motion, the resolution standing in the name of the member for Nipissing. I will try to focus my remarks in this connection on the resolution standing in the name of the member for Nipissing.

I have listened, over the last number of weeks, to the developing controversy around this issue. The agreements and the disagreements between the federal government and the several provinces have been well known. I think it was Mr Clark, the New Democratic Premier of British Columbia, who opined some several days ago now that he didn't find the original agreement very satisfactory, but he quickly retreated. Then I heard other grumblings. The debate in the House of Commons last week was obviously very painful and led to a variety of other consequences.

I must say, driving home last Thursday night I almost veered off Highway 28 north of Peterborough when I heard the news out of Quebec City that the two parties in the Quebec National Assembly had agreed to a resolution that said the basis for compensation in the original agreement should be expanded and that the federal government should pay for the entire expansion. I thought to myself, "What's wrong with this picture?" What seemed to me to be wrong with the picture I was seeing was that on a life-and-death issue for thousands of Canadians it appeared that the politicians were playing the worst of political games. Whether it was Liberals in Quebec or New Democrats in British Columbia or Tories wherever, it just smacked of the worst kind of political gamesmanship imaginable.

1720

I tried to put myself in the position of that individual who came to my constituency office in Pembroke a couple of weeks ago to talk about what life was like as an Ontario resident who had contracted the hep-C virus. I think I would have been angry and furious about what I was

hearing on the radio and on television and reading in the newspapers. It was absolutely sickening, because it appeared that it was just all about who could gain some political advantage. I see today that Canadian Press reports the headline, "Nova Scotia Tories Threaten to Topple MacLellan Government Over Hep C," and on it goes. As a political class, I think we'd better all get the message.

I'm happy today to support the motion, because I think the motion reflects a broad base of public opinion in this province. I will be the first to say it's not unanimous. I was home for a very busy weekend, and I wasn't getting very many calls at my constituency office in Pembroke, to be perfectly frank. But I'll tell you, at the Orange Hall in Foresters Falls last night, or at the Presbyterian breakfast at Point Alexander yesterday morning or at the home show in Renfrew on Saturday afternoon, most people wanted to talk to me about hep-C and what was going on, or what wasn't going on. While it was not a unanimous view, most people felt that the deal that had been struck was unfair and arbitrary.

Some people, to be perfectly honest, were of a mind to support the narrowest possible construction and wanted no movement off the original deal. Many people were on the other side of the equation. It was a very interesting array of public opinion. Middle-aged businessmen were, in my experience, the most determined to see the basis for compensation expanded. Some people who I might normally associate with different positions, more interventionist and expansionist positions, were on the other side of the argument, saying, "No, the Rock-Witmer deal is good enough." It was very interesting. But everyone held their view very tenaciously.

I don't know how many of you heard Cross Country Checkup yesterday afternoon, two hours on the national broadcasting service of the CBC. It was a very powerful program. Again, a range of opinion but a surprising number of people who felt that there was something fundamentally unfair and arbitrary with what had been arranged. That's essentially where I come down.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): You're going to fall off that rope.

Mr Conway: Listen, I say with all candour — I want to be very frank, and I don't say this lightly, to my friend from Nipigon —

Mr Pouliot: Stop dancing.

Mr Conway: I say this because the hep-C people who came to see me said that, and these are the people we've got to care about. They said to me that there will be people in the 1986-90 category who probably won't need any compensation, and there will be scores of people outside of that four-year period who will need substantial assistance and compensation. I think they're probably right. They pointed to the Irish example as the one we should probably follow. They're the people who are exposed, and as the member for London Centre eloquently said a while ago, it is their lives that will be changed forever, not mine.

I'll say this. If I walked into the hospital in the period of the 1980s and I got blood products, I would assume that

those blood products were safe. I'll say to my federal friend Mr Allan Rock, some of the analogies he's used in the last few weeks and some of the analogies that other health ministers have used have been exceedingly unhelpful, very unhelpful and very inappropriate. If we walk into the Peterborough General or the Pembroke General or the Sunnybrook in Toronto, we expect, a priori, that the blood products are safe, and if I'm poisoned with the blood products in a hospital in this province or country, I have a right to expect redress.

That's what's happened here. This is not someone who went out and decided to buy a breast implant — not to buy it; I apologize for that phraseology — but who decided to have a breast implant or some prosthetic device or some other service. These are people who went to the health care system and were poisoned. That's the central issue.

Now the consequences of the poisoning are apparently variable. Not everyone has the same consequence. The group that came to see me in Renfrew county a couple of weeks ago said: "That's what you've got to consider. We don't expect you to open wide the doors of the treasury. We want fair and adequate compensation based on need, and the 1986-to-1990 window is altogether too arbitrary." I have not studied this question to know in great detail what the minutiae of the resolution might be. Judge Krever has. He's recommended a broader base of compensation than we originally agreed to.

You know when I hear people saying, "Oh, well, you know, these people." These people what? When I turn on the tap at home in my community or my Toronto apartment, I assume that I'm not going to be poisoned by the water that I drink. More fundamentally, I certainly assume I'm not going to be poisoned by blood that I get in a Canadian hospital — and thousands of our fellow Canadians have been poisoned. That, for me, is the central question that we must address.

I don't know about the Irish model, but I understand that what was done in Ireland was the establishment of some kind of a medical board that is going to review on a case-by-case basis, looking at need of specific individuals. I stand here today telling you that the people who came to see me in Renfrew North, the Ontarians suffering from this virus, said that would be for them an appropriate model to try to emulate. I stand here today proudly to put their case before this assembly. I don't see it as an inappropriate suggestion at all.

I want to say in conclusion that whatever happens, I think we must respect the sense that is broadcast in the Canadian public opinion that there is something unfair and arbitrary about what was initially intended. One of the fundamental values in our political culture is fairness. I believe that today's resolution is a significant step forward to respond to that sense in the Ontario and Canadian public that we can be more fair than we were initially.

My friend Bradley pointed out just a few moments ago, it's just six days ago that the Ontario Minister of Health was writing members of this House saying, "The original deal is my deal, and I'm not moving off that." She sent certain letters to make that point. I'm pleased she and her

colleagues have moved off the original position. I think it will be seen by the Canadian public and certainly by the Ontario public as the right and responsible thing to do.

I say again in conclusion, as a citizen as much as a legislator, there are some times that the public of the community has every right to expect that elected officials, whether local, provincial or national are going to behave in a fashion that responds to real human need and tragedy. We have, all of us, inadvertently or otherwise, discounted the currency of our trade by this embarrassing, disgusting political gamesmanship that's gone on for too long.

Someone once said, "Politics is at one and the same time the noblest of the arts and the most soiled of professions." I'll tell you, there has been too much soiled linen piled up in the face of thousands of Canadians who were poisoned by the blood system, most of them in Canadian hospitals. That's why I'm proud to stand here today, having heard from my constituents who suffer with this terrible virus, and support the resolution standing in the name of the member for Nipissing.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

1730

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): This is an important resolution. It may be just as important for what it doesn't say as it is important for what it does say. Part of what we're trying to do here this afternoon is to get down to some language and some understanding that is clear. I would offer up the language of Mr Justice Krever as the language that I hope eventually we will all be able to endorse.

Why is Mr Justice Krever's language so important? Because he lays out very specifically in his report what compensation is necessary, what kind of compensation there ought to be for the victims of hepatitis C.

He says in his report, after having studied the tainted blood scenario for many years, after having called many witnesses, after releasing that exhaustive report, "It is recommended that, without delay, the provinces and territories devise statutory no-fault schemes for compensating persons who suffer serious, adverse consequences as a result of the administration of blood components or blood products."

In making that recommendation, he doesn't put in any artificial dates. He doesn't say "people identified after this date or before that date." He's very clear in saying that it should be "statutory no-fault schemes for compensating persons who suffer serious, adverse consequences as a result of the administration of blood components or blood products."

What I would hope is that the government of Ontario, the federal government and all the provincial governments would come together and put together a compensation strategy that flows directly from the words of Mr Justice Krever.

If I may refer to this government, the problem we've had is that this government has tried over many months to avoid moving in the direction that Mr Justice Krever has advocated. Prior to the release of the Krever recommendations, this government had been resolute in not accept-

ing any responsibility for compensation. In fact, the then Minister of Health, Jim Wilson, stated several times that the province pays the health care costs of these victims and the responsibility for any compensation should be the federal government's. In other words, the original position of this government of Ontario was, "Not responsible in any way for compensation."

Upon the release of the report, the present Minister of Health, Elizabeth Witmer, said only that she would study the report: "On any of the recommendations that have been made within the report, we're going to continue to analyse them. We won't be making any statements until such time as we've had an opportunity to meet with our federal, provincial and territorial colleagues." That was the next position.

Then we have a Toronto Star article on May 2 which says that it was the provincial governments, specifically Ontario and Manitoba, that would not agree to compensation in any way. Then we have Elizabeth Witmer stating on the eve of the federal-provincial conference that the provinces owed nothing to compensation.

Then we have the release of the compensation package. There is widespread anger across Ontario and indeed across Canada that it is not a compensation package; it is in effect a package which tries to limit the liability, a package which compensates some, leaves out thousands of others and simply tries to limit the legal liability. That's the emphasis of the existing package.

Then in this Legislature, following the release of the package, I and the member for London Centre, our health critic, Marion Boyd, asked the Ontario health minister, "How could you sign on to a so-called compensation package which will exclude 30,000 of the innocent victims of the tainted blood scandal?"

The response from the health minister was: "As the member knows, there were ongoing deliberations and discussions by health ministers throughout the Dominion of Canada, including Mr Rock, the provinces and the territories. There was very careful analysis done of the Krever report, of all the information that was provided, and after that very, very careful deliberation there was a decision made and an assistance package was provided and agreed to by all of those individuals at the meeting."

In other words, this government then bought into that package that was released, the package which has been the subject of so much criticism across the country.

Today, after I think testing the political opinion polls, the Premier and his government are now saying they want to have a better compensation package. This is the resolution, and I want to read it, because it's important to understand what this resolution says and doesn't say:

"That the Legislative Assembly support the Ontario government's call for a compensation package for Ontarians who were infected with the hepatitis C virus through the blood system prior to 1986, and that pending a resolution of federal liability for the contaminated blood problem, Ontario agree in the interim that such new package be funded by Ontario and the federal government on the

same basis as the federal-provincial agreement covering 1986 to 1990."

In so far as that statement says that the compensation package that exists ought to be expanded, I agree with it and I support it. I believe every New Democrat would agree with it and support it. But in view of the fact that this government has had, I would argue, four positions now in less than five months on the compensation of victims of tainted blood, I think it's our duty here today to try to pin the Harris government down. That's what we're going to try to do.

Earlier today I asked the Premier if he would follow the words of the Krever commission. What I was hoping was that the Premier would simply say, "Yes." This is what the Premier said:

"I don't know why you're talking about legal liability. If all I did was listen to the lawyers, I wouldn't have made the statement and the announcement that I made today. Of course this statement is on compassionate grounds of people who through no fault of their own, as pointed out by Mr Justice Krever, have been infected with hepatitis C. There will be other legal challenges, and the lawyers can fight that out. There will be intergovernmental battles between our government in the provinces and the federal government.

"In the meantime, we have come forward so that victims, I think as was Krever's wish, do not have to wait for that intergovernmental wrangling which undoubtedly will go on and the discussions among the lawyers which will undoubtedly go on."

What I got from the Premier was that the Ontario government would like to compensate on compassionate grounds. But I didn't hear a commitment to "a statutory no-fault scheme for compensating persons who suffer serious adverse consequences." Simply adopting those words would have done; simply stating those words would have done it.

I then asked the Premier of Ontario for a commitment to ensure that people who qualify for an expanded package of compensation, people who qualify for a new package of compensation, people who have been affected by tainted blood, would not lose other benefits that might be available to them in Ontario, such the Trillium drug benefit and certain benefits that might be available to them under social assistance. All I got from the Premier was: "We have put our money on the table in a compassionate way to all victims of hepatitis C. I see nothing in our offer that takes away from any of the other provincial programs."

All I wanted from the Premier was a straight answer that said: "Any benefits that an innocent victim receives under the Trillium drug plan they will not lose, any benefits they receive under a drug plan that is available through social assistance they will not lose, and any other benefits that may be statutorily available in Ontario will not be lost. They will be guaranteed." Unfortunately, I didn't get that.

I was trying to be helpful; we were all trying to be helpful. We want to be very clear that all those people who have suffered as a result of the tainted blood scandal

will be properly, compassionately and fairly compensated, and that what they gain out of the compensation package will not be lost elsewhere. That was what we asked the government today and I wish we had received that answer, because it would then make it so much easier to go forward to the federal government and say, "This is the basis upon which Ontario is prepared to enter into discussions," and then put the ball squarely in the federal government's court. Unfortunately, that didn't happen today, and unfortunately, as I read the words in this resolution, it's not there.

I've listened very intently to spokespersons for the Conservative government here today. What I wanted to hear from them was an adoption of Mr Krever's words. I wanted to hear people say very carefully that victims of tainted blood would not lose any benefits they might receive under the Trillium drug plan, would not lose any benefits they might receive under social assistance drug plans and would not lose any other statutory benefits. I haven't heard it.

1740

What I've heard the government do is go on and on about its health budget. I just heard the member Mr Hudak go on and not talk about compensation on the basis of compassion, on the basis of understanding, on the basis of fairness. I listened to a lot of claptrap about the amount of money the Conservative government has put in its health budget for the purpose of closing down hospitals and laying off nurses. It's got no business in this debate, in this discussion.

The health care costs that Ontario will have to bear, that Saskatchewan will have to bear, that Quebec will have to bear, that British Columbia will have to bear, we will have to bear anyway. Until you complete your project of privatizing Ontario's health care system, they will be covered by OHIP, they will be covered by Saskatchewan health insurance, they'll be covered by Quebec health insurance. To try to include the costs of health care somehow in the compensation package hints to me that you're not sincere in this, that you're more interested in developing a platform to talk about what you may or may not be doing in health care funding and that you're not serious about talking about and addressing the real compensation issues of people who suffer from tainted blood through absolutely no fault of their own.

Please stop trying to include the health care costs of people who are suffering from the tainted blood scandal, stop trying to build that into some sort of soapbox. It's got no place in this debate. Yes, the health care costs will be substantial, but what we're concerned about here, what Mr Justice Krever was concerned about, what he says very directly in his report, is that these people are suffering through no fault of their own, that they deserve to be compensated fairly and with compassion.

Let us stick to that issue. What we want from the Ontario government and what I'd advise the Ontario government to do, if you want to move this forward, is come out and very clearly say that people who are compensated in any new framework of compensation will not lose any

benefits they receive now under the Trillium drug plan, will not lose any benefits they receive now under a drug plan that may be available through social assistance, will not lose any other statutory benefits they may be eligible for at this point in time. Say that, and please at the same time use the language of Mr Justice Krever so that there can be no confusion, there can be no obfuscation, there can be no playing with words on this issue, so that there cannot be resort to any other artificial dates or other artificial timelines to be used for the purpose of excluding people from compensation.

I would have thought that as a government you would have learned your lesson in terms of what happened with the surviving Dionne quintuplets. I would have thought you would have learned your lesson, I would have hoped that you would have learned your lesson: that there is an expectation here that these people will be dealt with fairly, will be compensated fairly, will be compensated with understanding and compassion —

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): Go get a lawyer —

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Member for Ottawa-Rideau, come to order.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Hampton: I note that members of the Conservative caucus are already taking offence at my comments about fair compensation rather than narrow, legalistic definitions. This is exactly what we fear, that the government wants to use this issue as a soapbox. I'll repeat the advice. If that's what you're thinking, don't do it. You have already had four positions on this issue and your credibility is thin now. If you try to play with this issue any more, it will grow thinner.

Despite all the catcalls from the Conservative members, despite the fact that they don't like what I'm saying, that they don't like the emphasis upon the words of Mr Justice Krever and his recommendations, we will support this resolution. I hope the government is listening.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): It's with pride that I stand this afternoon and support the Ontario government's call for a compensation package for Ontarians who were infected with the hepatitis C virus through the blood system prior to 1986. It's my hope and my expectation that we'll do this with fairness and compassion and that for those who are able to meet the criteria we all worked through together in this House, their needs will be met, because they are the people we're talking about today.

This government is committed to ensuring that all Ontarians, and indeed all Canadians, have a system of health care they can rely on to meet their needs. As a matter of fact, the ministers of health and the premiers across this country have the same objective, and they are of all political stripes.

Ontario has made health care its number one priority. Last December first ministers all expressed their strong desire to protect the future of the health care system for

Canadians. They agreed that it is important to achieve broad agreement around future priorities and to work together to ensure that available funding is invested effectively by both orders of government.

I should add that this is a big challenge in Canada as a modern democracy. We have to find ways governments can work together with respect as they represent the citizens who elected us to entrust in our care the future of the health care system and other systems that are part of this great country called Canada.

On December 12 the first ministers met. They decided they would work together, the Prime Minister and all premiers and territorial leaders, to come forward with a framework for Canada's social union. What this really means is they would commence negotiations on a framework agreement for Canada's social union that would apply to federal, provincial and territorial governments, while respecting each other's constitutional jurisdictions and powers. There are objectives for the negotiations here, a set of principles for social policy such as mobility and monitoring social policy outcomes, collaborative approaches to the use of the federal spending power, appropriate dispute settlement mechanisms between governments, clarifying ground rules for intergovernmental cooperation, and identifying processes for clarifying roles and responsibilities within various social policy sectors.

The first ministers recognize these negotiations should proceed in conjunction with ongoing activities in sectoral areas, and they want to have the completed report ready for the first ministers in July 1998. What does this have to do with what we're talking about today? I think it has a lot to do with it. If we could get those negotiations completed, perhaps these kinds of negotiations would not fall off the wall. I will say that all governments here in Ontario, the prior two governments, all of us have worked towards that objective.

The province of Ontario continues to recognize the legitimacy of the assistance package for hepatitis C victims who were infected by the blood supply between 1986 and 1990. What we're talking about today is, yes, we are all coming under pressure, all of us in this House, all governments across Canada, to take care of the group that were left out. That's what this debate is about. There's a lot to do in this debate with the Ontarians and Canadians across the country who have clearly stated that compensating all hepatitis C victims is a national priority. That is why Ontario has acted, and the federal government quite simply should do the same. These are negotiations that we should enter into together for all citizens across this country who are infected, and the federal government must be part of the solution. It's about compassion and doing the right thing.

Ontario is digging deeper to support hepatitis C victims in this province, and the federal government should do the same. It should stop trying to have it both ways. It cannot call itself the defender of medicare while at the same time cutting funding to provinces for health care. This is true when the NDP were the government and it is true when

the Liberals were the government. We are carrying on with the policies and the negotiations of the two previous governments and time is up. It's that time in this country when we have to have a solution.

I wish some of the members would take the time to understand the file. Since 1994-95, the federal government has cut transfers to the provinces for health care, and it is the main priority of all the premiers and territorial leaders in the country.

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North): I have 15 seconds. I want to say there's another victim here and that's democracy. I'm appalled by that spectacle in Ottawa where all those members voted against their conscience and voted for this bill. That would not have happened in our caucus.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Mr Harris has moved that the Legislative Assembly support the Ontario government's call for a compensation package for Ontarians who were infected with the hepatitis C virus through the blood system prior to 1986, and that pending a resolution of federal liability for the contaminated blood problem, Ontario agree in the interim that such new package be funded by Ontario and the federal government on the same basis as the federal-provincial agreement covering 1986 to 1990.

Is it pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Let's call everyone in. It'll be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1755 to 1800.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Galt, Doug	Newman, Dan
Arnott, Ted	Gilchrist, Steve	O'Toole, John
Baird, John R.	Grandmaître, Bernard	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Gravelle, Michael	Parker, John L.
Bartolucci, Rick	Grimmett, Bill	Phillips, Gerry
Bassett, Isabel	Guzzo, Garry J.	Pouliot, Gilles
Beaubien, Marcel	Hampton, Howard	Preston, Peter
Bisson, Gilles	Hardeman, Ernie	Pupatello, Sandra
Boushy, Dave	Harnick, Charles	Ramsay, David
Boyd, Marion	Harris, Michael D.	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Bradley, James J.	Hodgson, Chris	Runciman, Robert W.
Brown, Jim	Hoy, Pat	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	Hudak, Tim	Sampson, Rob
Carroll, Jack	Johns, Helen	Saunderson, William
Christopherson, David	Johnson, Bert	Shea, Derwyn
Churley, Marilyn	Johnson, David	Sheehan, Frank
Cleary, John C.	Jordan, W. Leo	Silipo, Tony
Colle, Mike	Kells, Morley	Skarica, Toni
Conway, Sean G.	Kennedy, Gerard	Smith, Bruce
Crozier, Frank	Klees, Bruce	Spina, Joseph
Cullen, Alex	Kormos, Peter	Sterling, Norman W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Lankin, Frances	Stewart, R. Gary
Danford, Harry	Leach, Al	Tsubouchi, David H.
DeFaria, Carl	Leadston, Gary L.	Tumbull, David
Doyle, Ed	Lessard, Wayne	Vankoughnet, Bill
Ecker, Janet	Marchese, Rosario	Villeneuve, Noble
Eves, Ernie L.	Marland, Margaret	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Fisher, Barbara	Martel, Shelley	Wildman, Bud
Flaherty, Jim	McLeod, Lyn	Wilson, Jim
Ford, Douglas B.	Miclash, Frank	Witmer, Elizabeth

Fox, Gary
Froese, Tom

Munro, Julia
Mushinski, Marilyn

Wood, Bob
Young, Terence H.

This House stands adjourned until 6:30 of the clock today.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 96; the nays are zero.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

The House adjourned at 1801.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member / Député(e)	Constituency / Circonscription	Party / Parti	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Agostino, Dominic	Hamilton East / -Est	L	
Arnott, Ted	Wellington	PC	parliamentary assistant (Small Business) to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / adjoint parlementaire (secteur petites entreprises) du ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Baird, John R.	Nepean	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Finances
Barrett, Toby	Norfolk	PC	
Bartolucci, Rick	Sudbury	L	
Bassett, Hon / L'hon Isabel	St Andrew-St Patrick	PC	Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs
Beaubien, Marcel	Lambton	PC	
Bisson, Gilles	Cochrane South / -Sud	ND	deputy New Democratic Party House leader / chef parlementaire adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Boushy, Dave	Sarnia	PC	
Boyd, Marion	London Centre / -Centre	ND	
Bradley, James J.	St Catharines	L	deputy opposition leader, opposition House leader / chef adjoint de l'opposition, chef parlementaire de l'opposition
Brown, Jim	Scarborough West / -Ouest	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Correctional Services / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Services correctionnels
Brown, Michael A.	Algoma-Manitoulin	L	deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Caplan, David	Oriole	L	
Carr, Gary	Oakville South / -Sud	PC	
Carroll, Jack	Chatham-Kent	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Castrilli, Annamarie	Downsview	L	
Christopherson, David	Hamilton Centre / -Centre	ND	
Chudleigh, Ted	Halton North / -Nord	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Richesses naturelles
Churley, Marilyn	Riverdale	ND	Deputy Speaker and Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Présidente de la Chambre et Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Cleary, John C.	Cornwall	L	
Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony	Brampton South / -Sud	PC	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Colle, Mike	Oakwood	L	
Conway, Sean G.	Renfrew North / -Nord	L	
Cordiano, Joseph	Lawrence	L	
Crozier, Bruce	Essex South / -Sud	L	
Cullen, Alex	Ottawa West / -Ouest	L	
Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne	London North / -Nord	PC	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Curling, Alvin	Scarborough North / -Nord	L	deputy opposition House leader / chef parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition
Danford, Harry	Hastings-Peterborough	PC	parliamentary assistant (Agriculture and Food) to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / adjoint parlementaire (secteurs Agriculture et Alimentation) du ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales

Member / Député(e)	Constituency / Circonscription	Party / Parti	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
DeFaria, Carl	Mississauga East / -Est	PC	
Doyle, Ed	Wentworth East / -Est	PC	deputy government whip / whip adjoint du gouvernement
Duncan, Dwight	Windsor-Walkerville	L	
Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet	Durham West / -Ouest	PC	Minister of Community and Social Services / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Elliott, Brenda	Guelph	PC	
Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L.	Parry Sound	PC	Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances
Fisher, Barbara	Bruce	PC	parliamentary assistant (Rural Affairs) to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / adjointe parlementaire (secteur Affaires rurales) du ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim	Durham Centre / -Centre	PC	Minister of Labour, Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / ministre du Travail, solliciteur général et ministre des Services correctionnels
Ford, Douglas B.	Etobicoke-Humber	PC	assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement
Fox, Gary	Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings / Prince Edward- Lennox-Hastings-Sud	PC	
Froese, Tom	St Catharines-Brock	PC	parliamentary assistant (Colleges and Universities) to the Minister of Education and Training / adjoint parlementaire (secteur collèges et universités) du ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation
Galt, Doug	Northumberland	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment / adjoint parlementaire du ministre de l'Environnement
Gerretsen, John	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	L	chief opposition whip / whip en chef de l'opposition
Gilchrist, Steve	Scarborough East / -Est	PC	parliamentary assistant (Municipal affairs – urban) to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / adjoint parlementaire (Affaires municipales – secteur urbain) du ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Grandmaître, Bernard	Ottawa East / -Est	L	
Gravelle, Michael	Port Arthur	L	
Grimmett, Bill	Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / adjoint parlementaire du président du Conseil de gestion
Guzzo, Garry J.	Ottawa-Rideau	PC	
Hampton, Howard	Rainy River	ND	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Hardeman, Ernie	Oxford	PC	parliamentary assistant (Municipal affairs – rural) to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / adjoint parlementaire (Affaires municipales – secteur rural) du ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles	Willowdale	PC	Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D.	Nipissing	PC	Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif
Hastings, John	Etobicoke-Rexdale	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Transports
Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris	Victoria-Haliburton	PC	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines, deputy government House leader / Président du Conseil de gestion, ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines, vice- leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Hoy, Pat	Essex-Kent	L	
Hudak, Tim	Niagara South / -Sud	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre de la Santé
Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron	Burlington South / -Sud	PC	Minister without Portfolio (Seniors Issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (affaires des personnes âgées)
Johns, Helen	Huron	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / adjointe parlementaire du ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Johnson, Bert	Perth	PC	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

Member / Député(e)	Constituency / Circonscription	Party / Parti	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Johnson, Hon / L'hon David	Don Mills	PC	Minister of Education and Training / ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation
Johnson, Ron	Brantford	PC	
Jordan, W. Leo	Lanark-Renfrew	PC	parliamentary assistant (Tourism) to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / adjoint parlementaire (secteur Tourisme) du ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Kells, Morley	Etobicoke Lakeshore	PC	
Kennedy, Gerard	York South / -Sud	L	
Klees, Frank	York-Mackenzie	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Kormos, Peter	Welland-Thorold	ND	
Kwinter, Monte	Wilson Heights	L	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell	L	
Lankin, Frances	Beaches-Woodbine	ND	chief New Democratic Party whip / whip en chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Leach, Hon / L'hon Al	St George-St David	PC	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Leadston, Gary L.	Kitchener-Wilmot	PC	assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement
Lessard, Wayne	Windsor-Riverside	ND	
Marchese, Rosario	Fort York	ND	
Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret	Mississauga South / -Sud	PC	Minister without Portfolio (Children's Issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (enfance)
Martel, Shelley	Sudbury East / -Est	ND	
Martin, Tony	Sault Ste Marie	ND	deputy New Democratic Party whip / whip adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Martiniuk, Gerry	Cambridge	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General / adjoint parlementaire du procureur général
Maves, Bart	Niagara Falls	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour / adjoint parlementaire du ministre du Travail
McGuinty, Dalton	Ottawa South / -Sud	L	Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition
McLean, Allan K.	Simcoe East / -Est	PC	
McLeod, Lyn	Fort William	L	
Miclash, Frank	Kenora	L	deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Morin, Gilles E.	Carleton East / -Est	L	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Munro, Julia	Durham-York	PC	
Murdoch, Bill	Grey-Owen Sound	PC	
Mushinski, Marilyn	Scarborough-Ellesmere	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Premier / adjointe parlementaire du premier ministre
Newman, Dan	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre de la Santé
North, Peter	Elgin	Ind	
O'Toole, John R.	Durham East / -Est	PC	
Ouellette, Jerry J.	Oshawa	PC	
Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al	York Centre / -Centre	PC	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Parker, John L.	York East / -Est	PC	parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for native affairs / adjoint parlementaire du ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Patten, Richard	Ottawa Centre / -Centre	L	
Pettit, Trevor	Hamilton Mountain	PC	
Phillips, Gerry	Scarborough-Agincourt	L	
Pouliot, Gilles	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	ND	
Preston, Peter L.	Brant-Haldimand	PC	
Pupatello, Sandra	Windsor-Sandwich	L	
Ramsay, David	Timiskaming	L	
Rollins, E.J. Douglas	Quinte	PC	

Member / Député(e)	Constituency / Circonscription	Party / Parti	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Ross, Lillian	Hamilton West / -Ouest	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / adjointe parlementaire du ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Runciman, Robert W.	Leeds-Grenville	PC	
Ruprecht, Tony	Parkdale	L	
Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob	Mississauga West / -Ouest	PC	Minister without Portfolio (Privatization) / ministre sans portefeuille (Privatisation)
Saunderson, William	Eglinton	PC	
Sergio, Mario	Yorkview	L	
Shea, Derwyn	High Park-Swansea	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs
Sheehan, Frank	Lincoln	PC	
Silipo, Tony	Dovercourt	ND	deputy New Democratic Party leader / chef adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Skarica, Toni	Wentworth North / -Nord	PC	
Smith, Bruce	Middlesex	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education and Training / adjoint parlementaire du ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation
Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John	Mississauga North / -Nord	PC	Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Spina, Joseph	Brampton North / -Nord	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire du ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W.	Carleton	PC	Minister of the Environment, government House leader / ministre de l'Environnement, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Stewart, R. Gary	Peterborough	PC	assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement
Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris	Etobicoke West / -Ouest	PC	Speaker / Président
Tascona, Joseph N.	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	PC	
Tilson, David	Dufferin-Peel	PC	
Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H.	Markham	PC	Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David	York Mills	PC	Minister without Portfolio, chief government whip / ministre sans portefeuille, whip en chef du gouvernement
Vankoughnet, Bill	Frontenac-Addington	PC	
Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble	S-D-G & East Grenville / S-D-G et Grenville-Est	PC	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones
Wettlaufer, Wayne	Kitchener	PC	
Wildman, Bud	Algoma	ND	New Democratic Party House leader / chef parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim	Simcoe West / -Ouest	PC	Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth	Waterloo North / -Nord	PC	Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé
Wood, Bob	London South / -Sud	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General / adjoint parlementaire du solliciteur général
Wood, Len	Cochrane North / -Nord	ND	
Young, Terence H.	Halton Centre / -Centre	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Finances
Vacant	Nickel Belt		

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No. 6B

N° 6B

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 4 May 1998

Lundi 4 mai 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 4 May 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 4 mai 1998

The House met at 1830.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

ADHESION AUX COMITÉS

SÉANCES DES COMITÉS

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): I seek unanimous consent to move and consider government notices of motion number 3 and number 4 concurrently.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Agreed?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: Notice of motion number 3:

I move that the membership of the standing committees for this session be as follows:

Standing committee on administration of justice: Mr Boushy, Mr Crozier, Mr Kormos, Mr Martiniuk, Mr Ouellette, Mr Ramsay, Mr Rollins, Mr Stewart, Mr Wood (London South);

Standing committee on general government: Mr Colle, Mr Danford, Mrs Fisher, Mr Froese, Mr Gilchrist, Mr Lessard, Mrs Munro, Mr O'Toole, Mr Sergio;

Standing committee on resources development: Mr Chudleigh, Mr Conway, Mr Christopherson, Mrs Elliott, Mr Galt, Mr Hastings, Mr Hoy, Mr Maves, Mr Preston;

Standing committee on social development: Mrs Boyd, Mr Carroll, Ms Castrilli, Mr Duncan, Mr Hudak, Mr Klees, Mrs McLeod, Mrs Ross, Mr Smith;

Standing committee on estimates: Mr Bartolucci, Mr Bisson, Mr Cleary, Mr Doyle, Mr Kennedy, Mr Parker, Mr Pettit, Mr Wettlaufer, Mr Young;

Standing committee on finance and economic affairs: Mr Arnott, Mr Baird, Mr Brown (Scarborough West), Mr Guzzo, Mr Kwinter, Mr Phillips, Mr Rollins, Mr Silipo, Mr Wettlaufer;

Standing committee on government agencies: Mr Culen, Mr Gravelle, Mr Grimmett, Mr Johnson (Perth), Ms Lankin, Mr Marchese, Mr Newman, Mr Spina, Mr Stewart;

Standing committee on the Ombudsman: Mr Agostino, Mr Beaubien, Mr Ford, Mrs Johns, Mr McLean, Mr Pettit, Mrs Papatello, Mr Vankoughnet, Mr Wood (Cochrane North);

Standing committee on the Legislative Assembly: Mr Curling, Mr DeFaria, Mr Fox, Mr Hardeman, Mrs Johns, Mr McLean, Mr Morin, Ms Mushinski, Mr North, Mr Pouliot, Mr Tascona;

Standing committee on public accounts: Mr Beaubien, Mr Grandmaître, Mr Grimmett, Mr Lalonde, Ms Martel, Mr Patten, Mr Preston, Mr Tascona, Mr Young;

Standing committee on regulations and private bills: Mr Barrett, Mr Boushy, Mr Caplan, Mr Hardeman, Mr Leadston, Mr Martin, Mr Ruprecht, Mr Shea, Mr Sheehan.

Concurrently, notice of motion number 4:

I move that the following schedule for committee meetings be established for this session:

The standing committee on administration of justice may meet on Monday and Tuesday afternoons following routine proceedings;

The standing committee on general government may meet on Thursday mornings and Thursday afternoons following routine proceedings;

The standing committee on resources development may meet Monday and Wednesday afternoons following routine proceedings;

The standing committee on social development may meet on Monday and Tuesday afternoons following routine proceedings;

The standing committee on estimates may meet on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons following routine proceedings;

The standing committee on finance and economic affairs may meet on Thursday mornings and Thursday afternoons following routine proceedings;

The standing committee on government agencies may meet on Wednesday mornings;

The standing committee on the Ombudsman may meet on Wednesday mornings.

The standing committee on the Legislative Assembly may meet on Wednesday afternoons following routine proceedings;

The standing committee on public accounts may meet on Thursday mornings;

The standing committee on regulations and private bills may meet on Wednesday mornings;

That no standing or select committee may meet except in accordance with this schedule or as ordered by the House.

The Speaker: Mrs Cunningham has moved notices of motion number 3 and number 4.

Interjection.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: Yes, I did mention Mr Marchese.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): Marchese? Is that what you meant to say?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: I probably pronounced it incorrectly and for that I will be forever sorry. We've been together long enough that I should know this, is my point. I apologize.

I am pleased to present to the House the proposed membership and schedules for the standing committees for the second session of the 36th Parliament. I will be sharing the time with the member for Durham East.

Our government places a great deal of importance on the standing committees of the Legislature. They play an important and constructive role in the democratic process. Committees allow for a detailed review and public input towards legislation. Public hearings held by legislative committees provide an important opportunity for interested groups, individuals and organizations to express their opinions and participate in formulating public policy.

The committee process also allows for members of the opposition to more actively participate in the democratic process. We've experienced that over the 10 years I've been a member of this Legislative Assembly. Opposition members are able to voice concerns and debate their submissions, thus adding to the democratic nature of the standing committees.

I'd also like to mention that under the new standing orders, the member for Elgin, an independent member, was given the opportunity to sit as a permanent member of a standing committee. The addition of the member for Elgin further strengthens the democratic nature of the standing committees.

Our government made a commitment to listen to the people of the province. The committee process is one way in which we have kept that promise. During the first session of the 36th Parliament, our committees met for a total of 1,733 hours and 56 minutes. Committees met for a total of 353 calendar days, listening to 4,330 submissions.

Our government has placed a great deal of importance on the standing committees of the Legislature. The motion proposing the membership of standing committees and their schedules for this session will continue this government's and former governments' commitment. Our commitment to listen to the public, accept input and debate their submissions will be held in high esteem.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's a privilege to speak after the member for London North and to recognize the importance of motions 3 and 4. The committee process is a very important part of the democratic process in Ontario. It's my privilege and pleasure to stand this evening and second the discussion.

In the Common Sense Revolution we made a commitment to listen to the people of Ontario. Indeed, we have. We've been listening over the past while when the House was not in session. The Premier and several other ministers visited my riding of Durham East. They met with and spoke with people and, most importantly, they listened. We listened in our riding at town hall meetings and meet-

ings at our schools and other community facilities. We also listened to the people of Ontario through our participation on the standing committees that we're talking about tonight, the Legislative Assembly's standing committees.

There are 11 standing committees, a long-standing tradition here in the House. For the members watching and listening to the debate tonight, this process is an all-party process where the members of the opposition and the NDP, the third party, participate freely and openly, listening to the people of Ontario. In fact, we listened to a total of 4,330 submissions in the last session of the House — all people of Ontario, some of whom, by the way, were members of my riding of Durham East. I was so proud, when they appeared before various standing committees, to hear their voices and to have their voices recorded in the debates. The Hansard record-keeping is a very important part of that debate process, which will form the fundamental foundation of our democratic process, a democratic process that includes the public and allows them the opportunity to participate in the public hearings and have input into forming public policy. It's a very important aspect of the democratic process.

Our critics say that the committee process and public hearings were not democratic. Can you imagine that? As the member for London North has pointed out, we met for a total of 1,733 hours and 56 minutes. Imagine that.

1840

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): How many days is that?

Mr O'Toole: The best analogy I was able to determine was that it takes about 24 hours to drive across Ontario.

Interjection: Non-stop.

Mr O'Toole: Non-stop. In that length of time, 1,733 hours, we could drive across Ontario approximately 70 times. It gives you how much time we spent listening to the public on important pieces of legislation that were before the House. The whole thing means that the amount of time the Harris government has spent listening to the people of Ontario was equivalent to driving across the province 70 times. That's unbelievable.

If you think of it, in 353 calendar days — that was the equivalent of the time met, 353 calendar days — think of the drive. Drive across this beautiful province from Cornwall to Kenora —

Interjection: To name but two.

Mr O'Toole: — to name but two; also Calabogie and other places.

Mr Newman: Killaloe.

Mr O'Toole: Killaloe and North Beaver and Collingwood and Durham East and Scarborough, now the city of Toronto, and many other wonderful destinations. In fact, as part of the committee process, I personally have been to Thunder Bay, I have been to Sudbury and communities around Sudbury, Ottawa, Hamilton, Peterborough, Kingston, Belleville. We had one committee hearing in Belleville.

We had a lot of meetings in Windsor, but the meetings in Windsor seemed to get very badly sidetracked for some reason or other. The public input there seems to get side-

tracked; it's one-sided. We need more balanced debate down in that part of the country. But we've been to London, and to Hamilton, as I've mentioned before.

In those tours across Ontario, every member enjoyed seeing and feeling this province and listening to the people of this province, a very important part of the public hearing committee process.

If I wanted to compare the time spent in public hearings to something, it would be called the eternal weekend, which was the weekend that the official opposition held their leadership convention. Many people watched that on television wander on through hours and hours and hours. Some candidates were in and some candidates were out —

Mr Newman: Like a bad infomercial.

Mr O'Toole: It was like a bad infomercial, really. I would have to say, though, that some people were wandering around dazed and confused after all the debates and discussions. One was heard to say, "Where's my wife?" But after all that discussion, today, do you know that more than 80% of Ontarians still don't know who Dalton — I mean the leader — is?

I digress, Mr Speaker, but we want to make the point.

During the first session of the 36th Parliament, 52% of all eligible bills went to committee, in comparison to the previous Parliament, the 35th Parliament under the NDP, when only 38% of the eligible bills went to the public.

They did improve, I might add, on the Liberal performance. The 34th Parliament, the long-standing memory of the Liberal composition here: Is anyone interested in the amount of bills that went —

Interjection: Tell us.

Mr O'Toole: Everyone's waiting. Twenty-four per cent. I'm breathless. When I was looking at the research here and saw that we had doubled the amount of public hearings, literally doubled the amount of time taking important legislation — of course, there has been a lot of legislation, Mr Speaker. You are aware of that. You've sat through most of it yourself. We spent more time in committee during our first session of mandate than the Liberals and NDP put together.

Almost half the time that our legislation spent at committee was spent travelling throughout the province listening to other people, the people of Ontario, the people of my riding of Durham East. The Harris government views standing committees as an important part of the democratic process in Ontario. We made a commitment to listen to the people of this province, and we are committed. As everyone knows, we deliver on our promises, and the committee process is only one way we have kept our promises to the people of Ontario.

I might go on to share with people a personal story. I remember a young family appearing before us on one particular bill. She had one of her children with her. It was a very controversial bill, but the impression that she left on me that day was something I'll never forget. It matured me and told me how important it is to listen to people, even when they disagree with you. So this government is maturing in that responsiveness to people. I can tell you that story sticks in my mind as the day I grew up sitting on

one of the standing committees, so it's an important learning process.

I've sat with many members from the opposition and gotten to know them. I don't want to name names particularly, but I know there are members on the other side here this evening. I've enjoyed meeting with them and understanding their points of view. Most of the time they're wrong, but none the less I really do enjoy the fellowship and the understanding of their role and the role of the government. We all have a role. The public portion of this, the debate, the bringing to the people of Ontario is very important.

I'm speaking in support of the motion to continue our commitment to listening to the people of Ontario, the commitment to the continuation of the 11 standing committees, the tradition of those standing committees. I've served as Chairman of the Ombudsman committee with —

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): A very important committee.

Mr O'Toole: A very important committee, trying to have the last court of appeal is how we felt it, and working with the Ombudsman herself, Ms Roberta Jamieson, a very dedicated, focused professional.

In the last session I was the Chair of general government, a real privilege. We dealt with a lot of legislation and important bills. As the Chairman it was my duty to really work with the clerk of the committee and many of the full-time staff of this Legislature, provide the support for the members to make sure that we keep order and allow everyone an equal amount of time to make sure that all the views are expressed and recorded.

I've also served on the resources committee, one of the most interesting committees. In fact, we spent a great of time in resources and dealt with some of the education bills, very important.

I also remember some of the bills we dealt with, the farm legislation, through the consultation process as well as in the committee process. Consulting with the people of Ontario is really the most important part of this job.

I've substituted on almost every standing committee. The standing committee on estimates is a very important part of understanding how each ministry sets their protocol and budget and reviews it. In fact, every committee adds value to the operation.

The standing committee on finance and economic affairs I enjoyed particularly. The committee on general government, as I said, is a very important committee which I have chaired. There are members here tonight who have all taken their turn of chairing committees. I might add that some of the committees are chaired by members of the opposition and third party. So it is a shared responsibility and it's an important responsibility that I know members take very seriously.

I know this is an important debate and others want to participate, so I'm going to conclude by saying I am in support of motions number 3 and 4 that have been put by forth by the member for London North to continue our commitment to listen to the people of Ontario, accepting their input and discussion and their submissions.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I thought I would offer a few words this evening about the importance of committees and how those committees relate to the many problems that confront our province at this time. I am sure I will be able to relate those to the fact that we have various committees in the Legislature to deal with these matters.

1850-

First, I wish to deal with something which is rather perturbing to our community. You would be aware the other day of the headlines which I brought into this House of the desecration of a Jewish cemetery in St Catharines. That happened on one evening and then, subsequent to that, it happened on yet another evening. This was coinciding almost to the day with the celebration of the 50th anniversary of Israel. I noted in the House on that occasion that all members of the House shared my revulsion and the revulsion of all the people in our community with that act of vandalism against one particular group in our community and particularly in a venue as sensitive as a cemetery.

What has been encouraging to members of the Jewish community in St Catharines has been the outpouring of support from various groups, organizations and individuals. The churches in our community have come together to indicate their support for the Jewish community at this time of need, at this time of despair at almost inexplicable acts on the part of people who are obviously deranged in their approach to dealing with other human beings.

All of us have a role to play in denouncing this kind of vandalism, this act of hatred which takes place from time to time, whether it's the scrawling of a Nazi symbol on the wall of a synagogue or whether, as in this case, it's the damaging of gravestones within a community. It must send chills down the spine and bring tears to the eyes of members of the Jewish community — a relatively small community in St Catharines.

I know that all members of our Legislature, regardless of their political affiliation, regardless of the geographic area they represent, would want to express their revulsion at this act of hatred, this racist act, and express their support for the Jewish community in St Catharines.

I want to move from that to how the committees might deal with the throne debate. I listened with interest to the throne speech. What's unfortunate, by the way, is that the Lieutenant Governor has to read it. I suppose when I think of the alternatives reading it, perhaps the Lieutenant Governor is a better choice. But here we have a non-partisan person above the political fray who is compelled to read the words written by the staff of the Premier. My understanding is that it's the same people who run the government, who have more power than the elected members, affectionately known as the whiz kids, who develop the wording for the throne debate and the throne speech specifically.

What it tried to do was not change the substance of what this government is about but rather change the image. As you know, all the experts in a government will always tell you that the problem is not what the govern-

ment is doing but how it's communicating what it's doing, when in reality, if you examine policies of various governments over the years, this government included, you will see in fact it is the policies which have found disfavour with the public as opposed to the communications strategy developed by high-priced help in the Premier's office and in government.

I heard this last Friday in St Catharines as a number of people gathered in honour of the Premier at one of our days of action in the province. There were some people who saw the government as being harsh, tight-fisted, mean-spirited, narrowly ideological. They were portraying that image and obviously they hadn't read the throne speech, because the throne speech has attempted to soften the image of the Premier. We don't see the Premier as often now in a shirt and tie. We see him now in that open-necked shirt, and he's smiled more in the last month than I've seen him smile since 1981 in this House. He has, as I said, tried to cultivate a new image among the people of this province. However, every once in a while he slips back into the old way of speaking.

For instance, someone asked him why he was cutting off a \$37 payment which was made, I think on a monthly basis, to individuals who were pregnant and happened to be receiving social assistance. This money, of course, is to assist them with special food requirements which are necessary at this time of pregnancy. The Premier said, "Oh, well, we're going to cut that off because, you know, they're going to use it on beer; they're going to spend it on beer." No sooner did the words get out of his mouth than his handlers were scrambling to find some way of stopping the damage, stopping the haemorrhaging.

What I was wondering when I heard that is — and I know my colleagues may wonder — was he as worried about how the wealthiest people in the province would spend their tax cut, perhaps at the Albany Club, on — what's an expensive drink? — Rémy Martin or Jack Daniel's or one of these expensive drinks that I hear Conservatives have from time to time. I had not heard the Premier worrying about that. I was beside myself. I wasn't worried about the pregnant women spending their \$37 on beer; I was worried about the corporation presidents spending their \$300,000 on Rémy Martin or Jack Daniel's or some other expensive drinks. I don't know what they are. You people over there know what the expensive drinks are in the Albany Club.

Mr Froese: Niagara ice wine.

Mr Bradley: "Niagara ice wine," my friend the member for St Catharines-Brock says.

I kept thinking, "When was the last time I heard the Premier put his foot in his mouth on one of those?" It was when he was talking about the nurses of the province. When somebody came up to him and said, "Do you understand that 15,000 nurses are going to lose their jobs, Premier?" he said, "They're just like hula hoop workers, those who made hula hoops, and they have to retrain themselves for other jobs." Apparently a lot of them headed south of the border or retrained, because it appears we're going to be into a nursing shortage now in this

province as a result of the firing of so many nurses because of the cut in funding for the operations of various hospitals in our province.

I saw the throne speech as an attempt to remove the spots from the leopard and make the leopard perhaps look like a more friendly animal, a rabbit or something like that, something that's friendly and cuddly and nice to people. But every once in a while, when you take the Premier away from his handlers, from the script, he puts his foot in his mouth and once again people see that harsh, hard-edged, some would say mean-spirited approach — not I, of course — he takes to problems.

The government employs image-makers. I know that the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations — is he still that now? I think he is — David Tsubouchi, the member for Markham, hired Jan Dymond, a Conservative operative, at \$2,600 a day. Now, Bill Saunderson, when he was a minister, didn't waste his money on these handlers. He didn't hire somebody at \$2,600 a day to advise him on how to blame the federal government or the last Liberal government or the last NDP government or somebody else for all the problems and how to answer questions. But I wondered how tight-fisted Mike Harris and his compatriot Ernie Eves would be about \$2,600 a day being paid to Jan Dymond, a Conservative operative, simply to advise a minister on how to answer questions in the House. I know there are many other volunteers in the Conservative caucus who would answer questions without that and would save the government \$2,600 a day. The judge would do that. My friend the member for Ottawa-Rideau would, I know, do that for nothing. He wouldn't need someone in here to tell him how to answer questions.

So there was an attempt to soften the image, because everybody remembered the bully bill, Bill 26, that massive budget bill which was going to revolutionize Ontario, the bill that the Conservatives, when they came to power, tried to push through before Christmas in their first year. That was designed by the unelected people. I like trying to look after the Conservative backbenchers, who seem to be pushed into the background, except Steve Gilchrist, who's on TV all the time because he's a favourite of the Premier. I love seeing him on TV. Every time he appears I have faith that there might be an opportunity to topple this government. I figured out there isn't anything my friend from Scarborough East doesn't know about everything. He knows everything, and I'm delighted to see him on television.

I look at a government which was known for being tight-fisted, bullying, intimidating, now trying to soften that image. They didn't fool too many people. Some people maybe; very few, though, because they know what the real Mike Harris and the real ideologues who are around him are like.

In a motion today my friend Rosario Marchese — *Interjection.*

Mr Bradley: He wants me to say his name correctly; he told me how to pronounce it. We have a resolution from the Premier today. This is the conversion on the road to Damascus. For those of you who have read the Bible —

and I know that most members of the Conservative caucus certainly have; the family coalition within the Conservative caucus have read it. They would know about the conversion on the road to Damascus.

Here we had a government which was hand in hand with the federal government, the federal minister, saying, "The deal is good enough," for the hepatitis C victims. We read letters in the House today saying that they thought it was a good deal. But you know, you get enough public pressure out there and you want to cultivate that new image. Then we start to do things that are uncharacteristic of the government. Frankly, I'm glad about that today. I hope more of that happens, but it isn't the real Mike Harris and the real Ontario government. I know that.

The tax cut: I listen to the radio once in a while, and you get bombarded with government ads. These are ads paid for by the taxpayers of Ontario, out of their hard-earned funds.

1900

The Speaker: Member for St Catharines, it would be helpful if you could even refer occasionally to the motion that we're debating.

Mr Bradley: I'm always happy to engage in a debate which will allow the Speaker to rise once in a while and indicate to his wife that he is in fact in the Legislature and not at a hockey game or something like that. I thank the Speaker, because he's always correct in trying to guide me in the right direction.

I know there's a committee of the Legislature, Mr Speaker, that should deal with this government advertising. In fact I wrote a letter to the Speaker, because the Speaker in the past has expressed his view that governments, no matter who they are, shouldn't be using taxpayers' dollars to purvey political propaganda, and I agreed with the Speaker's pronouncement in that regard. On another issue to do with advertising, he even recognized that there was contempt of the Legislature by a senior member of the cabinet. That is why I bow to the wisdom of the Speaker on his rulings before the House. Once again, I have raised the issue with him and at an appropriate time will do so once again.

The reason I mention this is you may have heard on the radio, Mr Speaker, these ads extolling the virtues of the tax cut, as though it has had some positive effect on the province. Virtually everybody out there who knows anything about economics is laughing at that. I mentioned the other day Dr Joseph Kushner. Dr Kushner is an economist at Brock University — I always mention this when I say it — the most parsimonious member of city council I've ever seen. In fact, he's been labelled "Frosty the No Man," he's been labelled "Professor Negative" and "Dr No" because he consistently disapproves of what he considers to be unnecessary expenditures. You can't find a more conservative individual than Dr Kushner.

On St Catharines city council he moved a resolution last year calling upon the government to abandon the tax cut because, he said, any economics textbook will tell you, if you combine a tax cut with deep cuts like health care

and education and other areas of spending cuts in the government, the result is contractionary, not expansionary.

What we're fortunate about is we have in this circumstance a lot of trade with the United States and it's an export-driven boom in the economy. When the Liberal government was in power from 1985 to 1990, when things were booming, I probably was saying, like many of you people on the other side, "Isn't this Liberal government great, because the economy is booming." I know there are a lot of people who accurately said, "Remember that you export to the United States," and the American economy was booming then, even though we were booming probably more than that direct economy. It was booming then, and our exports were doing well.

Here's something you should tell our American friends: Ask them which country is their number one trading partner. Some of them will probably say Japan. It's not, of course; it's Canada. Do you know what the second-largest jurisdiction dealing with the United States is?

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): Cuba.

Mr Bradley: No. It is in fact Ontario. So when the economy is booming in the US, the economy is booming here in Ontario.

The NDP was unfortunate enough to be in power at a time of recession in the United States, and therefore —

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): Careful. They're together.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): Not in Buffalo.

Mr Bradley: I don't care if you're trying to prop up the NDP and be friends with them. I'm simply stating reality. They were faced with a real downturn in the American economy under a Republican administration, and as a result, things were not booming.

What is really causing things to boom is, number one, the US economy and all the purchases taking place; number two, the very low interest rates, not the high interest rates under the Progressive Conservative Mulroney government to which many of you adhered in years gone by, not that; and the other is the low dollar. When the dollar hovers around 69 or 70 cents, that always does us a lot of good.

Mr Guzzo: What's the dollar like in BC?

The Speaker: Order. Member for Ottawa-Rideau, the government had an opportunity to debate this issue and they used 11 minutes. Now it's the time for the opposition. Please allow them the same opportunity.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for St Catharines-Brock, I don't want to have a discussion about it.

Mr Bradley: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for asserting your appropriate authority in this regard.

Mention was made of British Columbia by the member from Rideau. I can say to you, with the downturn in the economy in Asia at this time, you're bound to see some effects on those parts of the country which trade with Asia.

Besides, you shouldn't be picking on the NDP. You know the strategy of the geniuses in the Premier's offices

is to help prop up the NDP. They're being nice to them now. Gilles Bisson doesn't like that because he doesn't like cosyng up to the Tories, but that is the strategy. So I should tell the member from Rideau, you're supposed to be nice to the NDP now and prop them up. That's what your role is to be.

We have the US economy booming, purchasing from here; we have those exports to the United States; we have the low interest rates; and we have a low dollar which makes us extremely competitive. I heard this in the finance and economic affairs committee. We also know that the tax cut is costing the treasury of Ontario, when fully implemented, \$5 billion a year.

1910

I talked to a friend of mine from the United States the other day who said to me: "You're getting a tax cut in Ontario, but you're running a deficit. Doesn't that mean you have to borrow the money?" I said "Yes. You know something? Since these people have been in power, instead of wanting to wipe out that deficit quickly, they want to implement a tax cut which costs them" — according to the Dominion Bond Rating Service; certainly no bastion of liberalism or socialism — "close to \$5 billion a year."

That's most unfortunate. You can look at it this way: Any money they get in transfer payments from the feds, they just give away in a tax cut. Who benefits the most from that? The wealthiest people in our society. What you're doing is you're transferring it to more regressive taxes. That's where we get into the downloading on municipalities. You've said to the municipalities, like Governor Todd Whitman of New Jersey —

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): Christine Todd Whitman.

Mr Bradley: Christine Todd Whitman of New Jersey, a Republican. By the way, anybody in Ontario who wants to find out what the Common Sense Revolution is all about should just look at what happened in New Jersey. What happened was they pushed all of the financial obligations and responsibilities down to the local level, and property taxes went up and user fees went up. The member for Huron will remember, as I do, that Mike Harris said, "A user fee is a tax." He said, "It's the same thing." I believed him then and I believe him today. It's a tax. What happens is that people of more modest income, not rich people, are compelled to pay higher user fees for services which we Canadians traditionally have felt should not require those kinds of user fees.

You see, there's a difference between the United States and Canada. In many states in the US there is polarization. The rich are very rich; the poor are very poor. Unfortunately, I see more of that happening in our Ontario. Yes, there are some people doing well. There are some very wealthy people doing well and I don't begrudge them that. I like seeing people do well. I like seeing various people making reasonable profits in this province. That's good for it. I don't mind that. But it's the taking away from people of modest income some of the basics that have been there before that disturbs me. I know Dalton Camp, the Conservative columnist, has on many occasions written about this

problem, where he sees governments, particularly the Harris government, moving in that direction.

All this ballyhoo about the tax cut having some effect in Ontario is just nonsense, any reputable economist will tell you that, but we're paying a big price for it.

I remember that Mike Harris got some advice on this from his own caucus when they first talked about the tax cut, maybe even before they came to power. I remember Ted Arnott, my friend the member for Wellington, cautioning against it and musing aloud about it; Gary Carr, the member for Oakville South, I recall; Morley Kells; a gentleman by the name of — well, I shouldn't say it. I'll say a person who represents Etobicoke West in the Legislature, back when he was a member of the Conservative caucus. All these people — and I say this publicly — publicly mused aloud about the advisability of a tax cut when you're already running a deficit. There's many a committee in this Legislature which has dealt with that very issue.

Now I want to get on to the government's addiction to gambling. This is where I want to bring in the family caucus, the people who ran on family values last time, the people who appear before committees of the Legislature — and they have members of the family values caucus there. What I'm thinking is, if they are really concerned about the damage that can be done to families by a lot of things happening out there — we've got the crime commissioners out there. I feel a lot safer now with the crime commissioners around Ontario, because one of them said, "Of course, you realize crime has nothing to do with poverty," which most people found rather astounding, but there we are. But let's get away from the crime commission, unless of course we can get the crime commission to deal with this government being addicted to gambling and gambling revenues.

My friend Bud Wildman, the member for Algoma, and you, Mr Speaker, will remember during the last election campaign and in this House my good friend Mike Harris saying: "I want nothing to do with gambling revenues. I don't want anything to do with them at all." His friend Ernie Eves said, without moving a hair on his head, that he himself was opposed to this addiction to gambling revenues.

Now we find this government looking for new opportunities on every occasion to get money from the most desperate people in our society. They've given the tax break to the richest people, to those who can operate hardware stores, the richest people in our society. I won't mention which ones. I mention it because one of my colleagues in the Legislature used to be associated with a company and he likes me to mention it. Sometimes I even say "Canadian Tire" to him, but it's something that we agree is to be amusing and not to be hurtful to him in any case. But the wealthiest people up there have their tax cut. However, as I said in a legislative committee, the people who are preyed upon are the most vulnerable, the most desperate and the most addicted people in our society.

The government was going to head out and put VLTs all over the province — VLTs are video lottery terminals,

the crack cocaine of gambling — and they received so much flak because we'd get up in the opposition and ask questions about it all the time. When they went to church, they'd find out that some of the people at the church weren't very happy about it, and some of their own members were very unhappy about it, and they started to recoil. They were going to put them in the bars and restaurants. In fact, they got two full years of fund-raisers out of that, where the members of the hotel association and motels and restaurants, who were very much for that, were very supportive of Conservatives at their fund-raisers. Then the fur hit the fan and they found out, when they had a vote last fall, that many communities did not want the new Mike Harris gambling halls —

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Gambling dens.

Mr Bradley: — gambling dens — that you people over there refer to as charity casinos.

The charities were put out there as a front. It looks good if you're going to help out the charities, so they came up with this great idea: "Let's have 44 charity casinos, Mike Harris gambling dens, across the province." They're permanent, so if they're out in Scarborough-Ellesmere, for instance, they wouldn't show up for three days and leave; they'd be there 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, pulling in the dough for Mike Harris and his friends in the government, and victimizing the most vulnerable people in our society.

It's not just poor people who are victimized; there are some people of means who are addicted to gambling. They can lose a lot of money there as well. But the damage it does to the social fabric of this province is not worth the price of the blood money that comes from gambling revenues in this province.

I call upon Mike Harris to call a moratorium on the escalation of gambling opportunities. I'm not rolling back the clock. I'm not saying you have to go back and remove Windsor or that you're going to close down Windsor, Niagara Falls and Casino Rama. That's happened and I don't want to dwell in the past, whether I happen to think it's a good idea or not. But I do think there is an argument in favour of a moratorium on further gambling opportunities in this province, and I suspect at least half of the Conservative caucus agrees with what I'm saying.

The government, you will recall, tried to pretend it was making some drastic changes. It said, "We're not going to have VLTs there; we're just going to have the good, old-fashioned slot machines, so everything's fine." Everybody is supposed to say, "That's fine, Mike, you can have your new gambling halls now." Well, I can tell you that if VLTs were the crack cocaine of gambling, slot machines are the cocaine of gambling, and you haven't made a substantial difference.

Interjections.

1920

Mr Bradley: They also changed, I say to the member for Scarborough-Ellesmere — they said: "After the court case in British Columbia, where the British Columbia government ran into trouble over casinos, allowing their charities to front for casinos, maybe what we should do is

give more money to the casinos. Those municipal councillors who are responsibly responding to the valid arguments against charity casinos, do you know what we should do with those people? Let's do a little arm-twisting. Let's get the charities to say to them" — I heard the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations allude to that, I don't know if in committee but certainly in this House, and suggest that perhaps the charities in those communities wouldn't do well unless they approved the new Mike Harris gambling halls in their communities.

Mr Wildman: Sort of what Klein did to the Catholic church out there.

Mr Bradley: Exactly.

Then there was a little bit of bribery out there, not bribery in the classic case of illegal bribery, but bribery in this way: They said to municipalities: "You know, it takes an awful lot to operate those gambling machines. We're going to give you an administrative fee for operating them, probably worth 200,000 bucks." If you are a municipality strapped for funds, you might just think for a moment that it might be a great idea to get them in.

Do you know who else shouldn't be in favour of these besides members of the family caucus on the government side who ran on family values and besides people who worry about the social fabric of this province? Our business people. If you put a charity casino in Kitchener, for instance, all it does —

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): Our city said no, Jim, and we don't have them.

Mr Bradley: I agree, and I know you agree with me. I'm with Wayne Wettlaufer on that.

When they said no, it's because they knew if they had one there it would simply take dollars that would go into Canadian Tire or Home Hardware or Zellers or somewhere else, some business, some service.

Mr Wettlaufer: It would also take \$90 million out of the community.

Mr Bradley: Exactly. I forgot about that argument. It also robs from existing service organizations who have their ways of raising money. It robs from them. You're right. So the Lions clubs and the Optimist clubs and so on find that their revenues are down.

Let me tell you something about bingo. I'm glad you mentioned it, I really am, because when they were running the bingos before, the prizes were limited. The provincial government said, "You can't have too big a prize." Then Mike Harris, not himself but his advisers, said: "Do you know, Mike, we can get all kinds of money. We'll have one on" — is it on television they have it? Who knows this? They have the bingo on television, a provincial bingo. Guess who the big winner is? It's Mike Harris and his government. That's who gets the money. The local people don't get much out of that big bingo, the province-wide bingo that they put in the bingo halls.

I'm calling upon my friends in the Conservative caucus to put pressure on the government. Like their change of heart on the hepatitis C compensation, maybe there will be a change on the road to Damascus, a conversion against

this. I know I can count on many of my friends opposite to call upon Mike Harris, because they know that their churches or other petitions call upon Mike Harris to call a halt to the further escalation of gambling opportunities in this province.

I am glad — did I not say in this House that if this didn't happen I would be applauding? I applaud the fact that we will not have VLTs in every bar and every restaurant on every street of every neighbourhood of every village, town and city in Ontario, because Mike Harris said we're not going to have them there. He says, "We're just going to have them in the existing tourist destination casinos."

I mention briefly — because I'm raising it with you, Mr Speaker, in another opportunity — the issue of government advertising. I think the government reached the all-time low when it used taxpayers' dollars to attack one segment of our society, that is, teachers, those who deliver educational services on the front-line basis, when they took adds out — I know there were complaints in the public accounts committee about this — and attacked teachers in this province. What they forgot was that teachers are sons and daughters, they're aunts and uncles, they're wives and husbands, they're next-door neighbours, they're best friends, they're members of service organizations, so the government message could not get out unretted.

I got calls from very strong Conservatives, who — I don't know whether by election time they will be back or not. I kind of doubt it from the way they spoke during Bill 160, some of them fund-raisers for you people. One in particular whom I know phoned me. He told me: "I've raised funds for these people, I've worked in their campaigns and so on. I have two" — I think one is a son and one is a daughter, or two daughters — "who are teachers and I am disgusted by the treatment of teachers by this government."

By the way, you will recall that the fight over Bill 160 was not a fight between the teachers of Ontario and the Mike Harris government of Ontario. It was instead a fight between those who believe in a strong, vibrant, high-quality publicly funded education system and those who do not. Of course, this government does not believe in the former but rather in the latter. When the bluff was finally called, it was discovered that they were really interested in taking funding out of the education system.

I may get back to Bill 160 shortly but I want to deal — in fact, I'll deal with it right now. Why not? What the government doesn't realize — and the funding formula flows from this and the new rules as to principals and vice-principals flows from this — is that you can't put factories out there and put students in factories, that in fact the concept of the neighbourhood school was something dear to the heart of Conservative members of this Legislature when I was first elected in 1977. To a person, they were concerned about the availability of neighbourhood schools for their children to attend. They recognized that as the numbers went up, the more impersonal the school became. They recognized as well —

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): Speaker, do we have to listen to this?

Mr Bradley: My friend the member for Scarborough East, who interjects, like many of his colleagues, not all of them, is living in the 1950s in education, when the people went perhaps to schools and did not recognize the changes that have taken place.

You see, many of the children who attend school today have far more problems than those who attended in years gone by. There are many more who come today from dysfunctional families. It's an unfortunate circumstance. I wish it were not so, but it is unfortunately the case. So the schools, not of their own volition but because it was necessary, have assumed more than a straight academic teaching or technical teaching role but instead have had to expand their role within our society. It is very difficult to do it without the resources that might be made available.

If you are rich or if you have a family structure which allows for helping the student individually, then you may not need that assistance, but many do. Back in — what was it, Bud, 1982, or a little beyond that? — Bette Stephenson brought a bill into this House called Bill 82, called for by John Sweeney, the member for Kitchener-Wilmot of the day, and others in this House, that provided for special education.

You have to consider that when many people in this House went to school, people who were, for instance, developmentally disadvantaged or developmentally disabled were not in what you call regular classrooms. Today, many students with disabilities are, and that requires some special assistance from those who are assistants to the teachers within the classroom.

1930

Another thing that you didn't recognize, though, in one bill where you backed down, where you did a full retreat — I think it was Bill 146. Bud, was that —

Mr Wildman: Yes.

Mr Bradley: Bill 146. We saw the government wisely back down, but today, through the funding formula, it is going to force schools to go to contracting out services for caretakers, for cleaning, secretarial services and other services. Anybody who understands anything about the school system recognizes that the custodian, the caretaker and the secretary are all part of that school team and if you take those out, if you simply bring in people who don't on an ongoing basis know the students and the needs of the school, you cannot serve those students as well. The school secretary watches those who come in and out of the school. So does the school caretaker. They are often the first people to spot people who don't belong in those schools, who might do harm to students. They know the students and they provide some additional assistance. I think the government is wrongheaded when it starts cutting or forcing schools to go to privatization for those people.

I think we recognize that we'll see, despite the pronouncements of the government, class sizes increase. In Niagara, as I'm sure across Ontario, 35 schools under the jurisdiction of the Niagara board of education, the public

board, are threatened with closure as a result of the new formula for principals and vice-principals, a formula which is totally unrealistic and which is causing chaos in the system.

And so it happens with adult education. I used to listen to members of the Conservative caucus say that learning is an ongoing process, that we're going to have to change jobs several times throughout our careers. Yet when we invest money in adult education so that people who have lost jobs or who may not have the education and skill to obtain the jobs that might be available are able to get that education and training, this government now says that they're not going to fund it as they have in the past.

Junior kindergarten: Obviously there's still a significant number in the government caucus who think that's just babysitting of some kind. They probably heard my speeches in this Legislature about Dr Fraser Mustard and all the studies he's done and the presentation he's made to various people in the province, probably through some legislative committees. He probably has been there; I'm not certain of that, but probably. Fraser Mustard already has the data available for this government to recognize that junior kindergarten is important, that if you invest at that end \$1, you can save \$7 at the other end through avoiding social assistance being necessary or avoiding, for instance, penal institutions and the law system which deals with some people. It's a good investment. Take my word, it's a good investment. I may not have said that 15 or 20 years ago, but certainly the world-wide studies have pointed to that and I think this government should have junior kindergarten across this province.

Now I want to deal with the hospital closing commission, as I call it. They call it a restructuring commission. It's appeared before legislative committee, I can assure the Speaker of that. Mike Harris's commission has now either closed or merged 32 hospitals in this province. You will recall, Mr Speaker, because at that time you were not an independent as you are now but you were a Conservative candidate and you would have been watching the television set with your then leader, Mike Harris, answering the question of Robert Fisher in May 1995 when Robert Fisher asked whether these reforms to the health care system would involve closing hospitals.

Let me quote Mike Harris. You probably think he said, "Maybe they'll close." Wrong. He said, "Certainly, Robert, I can guarantee you it is not my plan to close hospitals." Thirty-two hospitals closed or merged, several others under the axe.

In the Niagara Peninsula the beloved Hotel Dieu Hospital is under the axe; the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital in Grimsby threatened; the Port Colborne hospital and the Fort Erie Douglas Memorial Hospital, where the member for — we used to call it Erie — Niagara South was so vociferous this afternoon. He's going to find that those hospitals could be in trouble, and the Niagara-on-the-Lake hospital, where my friend Tom Froese represents people.

All of those are threatened because Mike Harris said to the people in the Niagara region when we had a local

commission, "I want to see a restructuring plan, but first of all you should know you're getting \$43 million less in funding for operating costs in hospitals."

That has had a marked effect. Ask anybody today who was in the hospital about 10 years ago or had somebody in the family in the hospital what it was like then and what it's like now. They'll tell you the service is substantially different, not because the staff of the hospitals want to do a worse job, not because they're negligent, but because there are far fewer nurses and orderlies, and people to clean up and assist in hospitals today, far fewer employees. They say now that if you go into the hospital you'd better bring somebody from the family to be an advocate on your behalf and do a lot of things the medical staff had to do before. This is simply not acceptable in the Ontario in which we reside.

It reminds me of the United States, where if you've got enough money you can get the best possible service. You can bring in your own 24-hour-a-day nurse, a personal nurse, if you have enough money. Here nurses would love to provide that service — so would doctors and others — and are unable to do so because of the underfunding of our hospitals.

Long-term care: At long last, under relentless pressure from the opposition and others, we finally had some kind of announcement made by the minister. I thought she was announcing a whole whack of new beds and services this year, because I know she announced some last year but I didn't see the dollars flowing. Instead we have this long, eight-year, vague program that might be of some assistance.

I can tell you that the residents of Linhaven, a nursing home in the north part of St Catharines, and their families and the staff are all aware of the impact of Ontario government cuts to the funding of that home. You can multiply that across the Niagara region.

People in our community are angry. They would like to appear before a legislative committee if they could — we're going to constitute those committees under this resolution — to put their case forward, because you understand now that the people who are in nursing homes arrive quicker and sicker, as my colleague Gerard Kennedy, the member for York South and the Liberal health critic, would say.

I well recall the stories my leader Dalton McGuinty, MPP for Ottawa South, has told this House about his days when he took a year off from his education to work as an orderly in the hospital, about many of the procedures he had to perform and the assistance he had to provide to patients. We recognize how important that is.

In terms of long-term care in the home, in terms of long-term care in our municipal homes, we need a great infusion of funds. In the Niagara Peninsula we have on a per capita basis the oldest population in all of Canada; that is, people 55 years of age and over. Per capita we have the largest number of people, certainly in Ontario and I believe in the entire nation. We should be treating those people with compassion and with care.

I want to mention the environment as well. I lament the appointments I see to the Niagara Escarpment Commission. I know the member for Bruce would agree with me when she sees the good old boy, the friend of Bill Murdoch, put on the commission. You know, the good old boy doesn't even believe in the commission, figures you should get rid of it. "We'll just sit down at the old county table and we'll divvy up the severances, and we'll have the Escarpment Hilton, the Escarpment Holiday Inn, the Escarpment Super 8, the Escarpment Comfort Inn," all of those, all over the escarpment.

1940

The member for Bruce must share my concern when she sees some of the appointments. I saw somebody from a gravel company put on there the other day. Was he the campaign manager of Jim Wilson, the Minister of Energy? Somebody told me that; I'm not certain. Somebody who is on that committee could help me. But you have to put people on that escarpment commission who believe in preserving the escarpment lands, not those who are out to destroy the escarpment.

We could get into the issue of giving away water. This afternoon there was a question from the Liberal critic on the environment to the Honourable Norm Sterling, the Minister of the Environment. There they are, the province just merrily giving water away, saying: "Don't worry about that water. We'll give that to somebody in Asia. We've got lots of water here, don't worry." Then when somebody finds out — I think it was because he was busy worrying about the automobile emission plan that the Premier keeps bugging him about, even though we know the Premier ultimately is responsible; I worry about that.

There are lots of things in the environment I worry about, but I want to get on to an issue of money and politics. This should be discussed by a committee of the Legislature. Let me tell you what's happening out there. South of the border — as Marcel Beaubien would know because he's near a border — on the other side of the border, in the United States, money talks in politics.

First of all, before I get into that issue, I was critical of the Minister of the Environment, but I want to compliment the Honourable Norm Sterling on his devotion to the Niagara Escarpment. What did he get for being devoted to the preservation of the Niagara Escarpment? He got it taken away from him and given to the Minister of Natural Resources. I can't think the Minister of Natural Resources has as much concern about it as my good friend Norm Sterling, but I digress.

Let me go back to money and politics. South of the border, in the hearings in the Senate and the House, through the national news media, you recognize the effect of money and that it affects how governments move and individual members of Congress vote. Why would we want to import those problems into Canada?

I noticed the other night, and I guess in a grudging way we compliment this, the Conservative Party — somebody will correct me if I'm wrong — had a fund-raiser in Toronto where I think you had 3,100 people at \$750 a plate. You cleared two million bucks. Wow, that's im-

pressive. But there are a lot of rich people you've done favours for and it's payback time, so they come out and give money to the party. In fact I'm going to advertise, next Thursday evening in St Catharines, another big Tory fund-raiser. I hope there aren't people out there who got government grants who think that because they got a government grant or because they are a transfer agency they have to attend this fund-raiser. I hope they wouldn't think that.

I want to get back to the issue of money and politics. It is my understanding that Mike Harris and his colleagues want to increase the spending limits in campaigns. Right now there's a formula which would allow us to spend, in most ridings, somewhere around \$45,000 maximum per candidate. I recognize the ridings will be larger next time, so I believe that you should simply extend that formula to a larger riding. But there are people within the hierarchy, the whiz kids in the government, the unelected people who are not accountable to the population of this province, who are saying, "We've got a great idea." Maybe Tom Long is saying this, I don't know. He's big in fund-raising and in the party. The former president, Steve Gilchrist, is here; he probably agrees with this. But he says: "Let's increase the spending limits. The sky's the limit. Spend as much as you want." So the people who line up at the fund-raisers, who pour all the money in, will be able to spend a lot of money because they've helped the wealthiest people, the most powerful people in our province. What I'm saying is that the present spending limits are fine. If you were to increase those spending limits, you would simply increase the importance of money in our political system.

There's a second aspect of this. They also want to increase the amount that a company or an individual can contribute to a candidate or political party. Once again, the larger the amount of money that can be contributed to an individual candidate or to a party the more it is going to have an effect on the system, may even affect the way in which the government or the candidate proceeds.

Also, they would like to take off the limit which says you can advertise only in the last three weeks because if you've got millions upon millions upon millions of dollars from the wealthiest people in this province, you can saturation-bomb the province with your advertising. You can fill the airwaves with what we call hot-button ads, portraying the wedge issues out there, which portray one segment of society against another segment of society.

For the sake of our democracy and to avoid the many problems that have happened south of the border, I call upon this government to renounce its plans to increase spending limits and to increase donation limits and to change the rules which affect campaigns in this province.

I will talk about the democratic system as we get into the latter part of my remarks. I could go on at some length with the permission of members of the House. I won't mention that rent control was due to be abolished on April 1. The government can't get its act together on that, fortunately, and those students and seniors and so on who will not benefit by this but will be hurt by it will see that happen soon.

I'll mention the students whose tuition fees are going out of sight so that only the very wealthiest students and only the very best students academically will be able to proceed through post-secondary education without a huge financial penalty.

I'll mention my concern about Conrad Black owning 58 of 103 or 104 daily newspapers in this country and how unhealthy that is, not just because it's Conrad Black but anybody who would own that many papers.

Lastly, I'll mention that the rule changes which this government made have a devastating effect on the way this Legislature proceeds. Virtually all of the so-called bargaining chips that the opposition has to slow the government down, to allow the government to take a second look at its drastic policies which it's proposing and bulldozing through the province, are gone. Debate is significantly limited on major bills going through this House and the opportunity for the government to get its way on a daily basis, for instance, by relegating question period to seventh place instead of the second or third place in the list of things we do, all of those are detrimental to democracy, and ultimately, if you take away all other issues in this province, the democratic system has been damaged badly by Mike Harris and the whiz kids in his office.

The Speaker: Further debate?

1950

Mr Wildman: At the outset, I would like to indicate that I will be splitting my time with my two colleagues.

I enter this debate on the two motions regarding the committees in this House with some trepidation. I just listened to two presentations in this debate, one from the member for Durham East, which beside the tour de force of my friend from St Catharines was sort of a vignette, and I heard two very different speeches. I'm trying to figure out how exactly I could come down in the middle, keeping in mind that I am somehow trying to relate to the two resolutions before the House.

I was just ruminating, as I listened to these two speeches, about the fact that in the current playoffs in the National Hockey League the referees have been instructed to call the games by the rules, and I noted that you are taking a very wide view, liberal view I might even suggest, of the rules of the House in the way that you have been calling the play this evening. I note that while the member for Durham East did talk about the committees, the member for St Catharines only sort of elliptically referred to the committee motions.

The member for Durham East started, I think, to give us sort of a tour of his riding. He is wont to do that. He has done that a number of times here. Then he moved to sort of a tour of the province, saying how many days, how many hours, how many miles —

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): Minutes.

Mr Wildman: No. I asked him about minutes and seconds, but he didn't get to that, but how many miles, how many communities, how many groups the committees had heard. He had all these numbers and he then compared them to the previous two governments and indicated that the percentages were far higher for this government and

that is an indication, he said, that this government is more consultative and listens to the people of Ontario more than the two previous governments. It's a rather interesting analysis. It's sort of a numerical view of consultation, that somehow by having a lot of hours or a lot of communities, a lot of miles covered, that indicates that there is consultation going on.

The thing the member for Durham East forgets, of course, is that if the majority members of the committee are not listening to what anybody says when they come to make presentations to the committee, it's not really consultation; it's just a charade. It doesn't really mean anything, except that the members of the committee are getting to travel and to see a little bit of the province and to meet various people and say hello, meet and greet. Sometimes they greet in a very vicious way and other times they're more friendly, but it doesn't mean anything unless there actually is some result.

If members of the public come before the committee and make cogent arguments and the members of the committee then say, "Yes, you have a very good point" — I'm not suggesting that they would just abandon their agenda, but they might at least adapt it or make changes or deal with questions of implementation based on what they hear in the committee. But this government doesn't do that. This government just goes however many places the member for Durham East says and doesn't pay any attention to what anybody says.

As a matter of fact, there are a few members of that caucus over there who have been known to lecture people who come from the public, give them little lectures about how they don't really understand, they're not really with it, and if they did understand, they couldn't be saying what they are.

Mr Bradley: Remember Carol Jones?

Mr Wildman: I remember going to St Catharines — the member for St Catharines mentions this — when we were on the committee on Bill 160. We went to, I think it was, a Polish legion hall. We held a hearing in the Polish legion hall and, as you all know, despite what the member for Durham East said, there were far more people who wanted to make presentations on Bill 160 to the committee than were accommodated by that committee.

We also know how this government attempted to usurp the operations of the steering committee by ensuring that each member of the committee — in other words, each individual member rather than each party — would be able to determine who could appear, and put out a list and somehow skew the list so that more supporters of the government would be able to make their presentations than those who were opposed, when in fact the vast majority, literally thousands of people who wanted to make presentations, were very concerned about Bill 160 and were opposed in most cases.

Ms Jones came to the committee in the Polish hall in St Catharines and she wanted to make a presentation. I didn't realize at the beginning who this person was. She obviously knew a great deal about the operation of committees, she knew a lot about politics and she certainly wanted to

share her views about education. I discovered there was a good reason she knew that much and she was so knowledgeable, and that was, for 20 years or more, as I understand it, she had served as the constituency assistant for one Robert Welch, a man for whom I have a great deal of respect and with whom I served in this House for many years. Ms Jones wanted to make a presentation opposed to Bill 160 and she was very angry at this government.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: Was she the only one, Bud?

Mr Wildman: No, there were many, but she wasn't on the list. She was one of many who couldn't get on the list, and she was very angry.

Mr Gilchrist: She could send her comments in writing.

Mr Wildman: She did send her comments in writing, but she wanted to make an oral presentation to the committee and she was denied. She was literally escorted out. This is not a person who could be dangerous to the committee. There were three or four plainclothes policemen. Two of them were following the committee around the province, because the Chair of the committee was so concerned about all of these people who were opposed to the committee. So much for consultation.

Mr Gilchrist: It was a Liberal Chair.

Mr Wildman: It was a Liberal Chair.

At any rate, two of these plainclothes police persons were from the local constabulary from St Catharines, Niagara region police. These four hulking, burly gentlemen escorted this petite, angry, perplexed and frustrated Tory from the room. She was saying as she left that she had campaigned for the current member for Lincoln and that she had campaigned all of her life for Conservatives in Niagara region, that she had served Bob Welch for 20 years as his constituency assistant and she would never work for this government again.

That is the kind of consultation the member for Durham East was talking about when he was talking about committees, a kind of consultation that even turns off long-standing supporters of the Conservative Party because they know it for the sham that it really is, that this is not real consultation, just a façade. It's just to make it look as if the committee is travelling to communities to listen to people when in fact the majority on the committee has the view: "We've made up our minds. Don't confuse us with other opinions. Don't confuse us with facts."

Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre): How many amendments were there?

Mr Wildman: Most of the amendments were put by the government because they didn't know how to draft the bill in the first place. The member for St Catharines in his presentation talked very much about various approaches that this government has taken. Because they have the reputation that I've described of not listening, of not being consultative, of not caring about what people —

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): What amendments were they, Bud?

Mr Wildman: The member who is barracking across the way spent some time one night in his own riding that I won't get into — but if I were he I would not be too vociferous in talking about how this government listens to the

population — a situation that has never happened in the history of Canada before, where a man got killed defending a land claim. This member was right there, right in on it, and he knows he should have the sense to hold his tongue and realize that it's time this government stopped and reassessed what it's doing and understood that it is important to listen to people and to understand when people disagree and to disagree civilly rather than using force when you don't like what the people are saying.

2000

The member for St Catharines was talking about the various things this government is doing because it has this reputation of not listening, not caring, not being consultative. The government's polls indicate that. I'm not telling them anything they don't know. The government has been told, we've seen the documents, that they must be more caring, that they must be seen to be concerned about seniors, they must be seen to be concerned about children, about minorities, about women.

So the government has decided that it will try to put a new face on its agenda. They have the Premier going around the province meeting with handpicked groups to be seen as listening. This is going to somehow change the view of the population about this government. I don't think it's going to work, because the Premier's real personality always comes through no matter how much his spin doctors attempt to spin it. Even when he was making an offer to the survivors of the Dionne quintuplets, he couldn't help but stand there saying: "We're going to give them \$2,000 a month. Take it or leave it. Even if they don't want it, we're going to put it in their bank account, whether they like it or not." Then of course he reacted and he changed.

Then of course we've been told that this government has not had enough of attacking the poor and knocking down the poor. The first thing they did when they came to power was cut the incomes of the poorest people in this province by 22%, and now, just a couple of weeks before the government wants to bring in the Healthy Babies initiative, what does this government do? This government cuts the \$37 a month for pregnant mothers on social assistance. This \$37 a month is supposed to help them get fresh fruits and vegetables —

Mr Gilchrist: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: At least the member for St Catharines made a passing attempt to have it appear that he was on topic. We've had a quarter of an hour from the third party and as yet there hasn't been a single reference to the motion that's before us here tonight. I wonder if you could remind the member that would be a more appropriate use of his time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): That is a point of order.

Mr Wildman: I don't see how you can say it's a point of order. I've been talking about the member for Durham East's discussion about committees and how it was consulting. I'm sure that's what we're dealing with: two resolutions concurrently about committees and how the government, even despite all of the hours he said the government had put into going around the province, has a

reputation of not listening and not caring and not responding.

So the government has attempted to do two things. What has this government done?

Interjections.

Mr Wildman: You're not keeping them in order, Speaker. Every time the government runs into trouble with its own supporters, it kicks the poor again. What did they do? They took the \$37 away from pregnant mothers on social assistance. This \$37 was to assist mothers to get good nutrition so that they had healthy foetuses, so they'd have a healthy pregnancy; to make it possible for them to get fresh fruits and vegetables, for instance. They took that \$37 away. That's bad enough to do that, a government that said they were going to have a Healthy Babies. But then when asked about it, the Premier's personality, as I said, comes out. "Why did you do this, Premier?" "Well, we did it because they might use the \$37 to buy beer." It really is something when the leader of the province, the Premier of the province, can't be dignified enough to deal with an issue in a sensible way and instead attacks the most vulnerable people in our society.

As the member for St Catharines indicated, at least in that sense the Premier was being straightforward and honest. He was being himself. He was letting us know what he really thinks, how mean-spirited he really is: He's not only going to take the \$37 away from these people, he's going to accuse them of having wasted it on beer rather than buying the vegetables and fruit they need in order to have healthy pregnancies and healthy babies at birth. Not only is the government going to risk low-weight babies but they're going to have the gall to accuse the women of causing their foetuses to be at risk because they were going to buy beer.

I'm telling you, these motions that are before us will not change the view of the populace towards the government. They will not in any way give the government any opportunity to change the view that the people have about them being uncaring and not listening and not consulting, because inevitably, no matter how hard the committee members try to be seen to be listening, the Premier's real personality will come out and he'll betray his true views, his true mean-spirited agenda. All we have to do is ensure that in the committees we are able to counter that as much as possible so that when this government is defeated, they won't have done as much damage as the Premier would like them to be able to do.

Mr Marchese: I just want to continue where my colleague left off and add several other points that have not been touched on — at least one of them has, actually.

The changes to the rules that this government has made have caused serious concern, both to the members of the opposition but particularly to the public that is actively involved all over Ontario. They know that the changing of the rules that has permitted the acceleration of bills in a matter of days, that permits very little scrutiny of your bills, is wrong. That is something I think you will have to deal with in committee when you get there, because a number of people have raised it already in the committees

that I've been a member of, where they are not getting sufficient opportunity to debate your bills. Not only the public but we, the members of the opposition, have been curtailed in our ability to respond to the government members and their bills. They have curtailed our time in this House.

To be fair, the New Democrats did it. Some of our own members said, "It's not something we should be doing, because it limits the ability of the opposition," but we did it. I want to be one of those to admit that I thought it was a mistake. The Tories thought it was a mistake as well when they were in opposition, but it didn't take them long to get back into power and to immediately change the rules in terms of how much time we have here as members to debate bills; and not only that, but to limit the scrutiny of the public on those very bills that are hurting them on a daily, weekly and monthly basis.

That is one of the points I want to make, because here when we have an opportunity in this House to speak, we take it. We take every opportunity to raise points because we have so little time and so much to say. When members of the government say, "Are you going to speak to this motion?" of course we're going to speak to this motion, because there is much to be said.

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On the issue of government agencies, of which I used to be a chair and now in opposition I am joining that committee, I will be the Vice-Chair of that committee. I am very pleased to be there because I know the workings of that committee and know the kinds of issues we've had to deal with.

I want to raise a point with respect to that. I want to remind those listening that we did not always have a committee that reviewed appointments and reviewed the various boards, agencies and commissions that are connected to this government. In the past there was no such scrutiny. We knew not what you did; what the Liberals did or what the Tories used to do when they were in power for 45 years by way of appointments. They simply happened. Somebody made it happen. Of course, if you were lucky enough to know who was being appointed, you might be able to attack this person or that person or something that may have been going on in those committees, but we never had a clue.

To remind the public, the New Democrats established that government agencies committee, and it gave the opposition the opportunity to scrutinize appointments to those boards, agencies and commissions. If you recall — and some of the public will recall — both the Tories and the Liberals in that committee were blood-thirsty when it came to appointments connected to New Democrats. They could sniff out a New Democrat very easily, even when they didn't say "New Democrat." They called each and every New Democratic appointment in front of the committee to make the point that it was political patronage and that they, the Tories, would not engage in it. Liberals certainly would not engage in it and never had they done so in the past.

But lo and behold, these guys get into power — remember, they weren't going to do what the New Democrats did, to appoint a few New Democrats. You see, New Democrats wanted to be pure. We wanted to elect Liberals, Tories, NDPers, because we felt we were different as a party. We did. But it didn't matter to them. As soon as they sniffed out a socialist, there he was, in that committee, being scrutinized. But for you fine Tories — some of you don't know, because you weren't here, but the other fine Tories who remained in committee, those blood-thirsty Tories who said, "Never again; not under us," it didn't take them long. These Tories —

Mr Bradley: They're lined up at the trough.

Mr Marchese: Snorking at the trough. Not lined up at the trough; snorking at the trough, with those fine fellow friends, the ones Mike Harris spoke to the other day at the fund-raiser, where he told them: "We thank you. We know you understand us and we understand you. You've stuck by us and we're going to stick by you."

You know what that means? It's money that talks. It's that specie, that lucre, that pecunia, the glitter of money. That's what speaks between Tories and businessmen of the higher levels. It's not the little guys. The little businessmen hardly win the respect of these people. The big guys with the big dollars, they respect that. That's why Mikey, the Premier, at that meeting said, "We thank you for your support and we're going to be there to support you." What do you think it means when they say that? It's like one pocket on one side and a pocket on the other, interconnected. That's what it means. You will deny it, and of course it's up to the public to scrutinize your actions.

You people weren't going to nominate any Tories to those government agencies. No, not you, because you fine Tories would be different. You had the higher moral fibre then. It didn't take long to rid yourselves of that moral ground, had you any to begin with.

Moving along, M. Gilchrist, mon ami, you recall that in the throne speech M. Harris has transformed himself. He's a new man. I would say rather a chameleon, but forget that. Forget the chameleon nature of M. Harris. He's a transformed man. There's a renewal about Mike Harris, a new spirit — perhaps religious — of renewal, of wanting to seek out the compassion that those old Tories used to have.

You recall that my good friends M. Gilchrist and the member for Northumberland the other day defined compassion as a fiscal kind of responsibility. I thought that was an odd definition, frankly, because I don't believe the definition speaks to that. That's why Mike Harris today, on a motion that we dealt with, spoke about that compassion to the hepatitis C victims and said —

Mr Bradley: They did a poll.

Mr Marchese: Polling? No, they don't poll people to find out how they think. It's the new Mike Harris compassion. It's right here. It's written in big letters that he has found a way, because he saw the light, one presumes, and he's now making a big U-turn. You can make U-turns in life, as some of you know. You can retrieve some of those

old feelings you might have had as a child. So Mike Harris has retrieved those good old compassionate feelings.

Mr Bradley: You mean that wasn't his stand all along?

Mr Marchese: Never before. No, he's a new man now. He says that if the federal government does not come in half-and-half to pay to support those victims of hepatitis C, he, Mike, would fund it himself. I love this man. You've got to love this guy. He's a new guy. Please forget about things like —

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Mr Gilchrist, mon ami, Steve, look at this: "The province won't pay to bury the homeless." Forget stuff like that. That was in the past. It is true now that the city has to pick up the payment for the indigents. Those poor homeless who die may or may not have any family, may or may not have any money to pay for the burial, but the city has to pick up the cost of those indigents. It was once a cost shared by you and the city, but you have finally downloaded even the dead to the poor municipalities. A good friend of mine, Joe Pantalone, describes it thus when he says, "I know that the Tories have no respect for the living if they're poor, and now it's clear that they have no respect for the dead." Can you believe that?

Here is another quote from another councillor who says, "The province is kicking kids before they're born" — a reference my friend from Algoma made earlier about taking \$37 from women who are pregnant and who are on social assistance; that's the reference here — "and now they're kicking people after they're dead."

That was probably before. That was brutal Mike, but no longer. That was mean, brutal, dictatorial Mike. No longer. Now he's a pussy cat who wants to help every victim imaginable in Ontario. He obviously had to talk to my friend Steve Gilchrist from Scarborough East and say: "Look, don't say things like that. It's not just about fiscal responsibility, it's about having compassion for the poor, for people who are victims, such as the hepatitis C. Please don't define it as fiscal responsibility, because then people are going to think we just care about money and supporting our rich buddies through a downloading system, through the deregulation of everything that we see in sight, through the privatization of anything we can manage. People might think we're like that, and we're not. We're different people now. Please get into the messaging that we're trying to talk about here."

My good friend M. Bradley talked about the tax cut. We all talk about the tax cut, because, you see, it's important. You think of people like Mr Barrett, president of the Bank of Montreal; M. Cleghorn, the Royal president; M. Flood, CIBC. These guys are starving, poor guys, right? They work for these big banks night and day making millions for their investors and they only take home, just as a salary, \$1.5 million. They think that's so unfair.

Finally, you have a guy like Mike Harris saying: "You're going to get a tax cut because you deserve it, Cleghorn. You, Barrett, work hard for your money. For my money, you work hard. They're not paying you enough

and I want to give you a tax break so that at the end of the 30% tax cut you, Cleghorn, who earn \$1.6 million, are going to get \$120,000 more. How about that?" Cleghorn says: "Yes, I deserve it. Gee, I'm paying a lot for my money, and boy, can I invest a little more money to make the economy go. Yes." But the guy doesn't need a new fridge or a new trip. He's got the change for that little trip to Aruba, good God.

When we get into committee —

The Acting Speaker: Order. I've been listening intently to the member from High Park and I'm waiting for him to bring his remarks within the terms of the motion. I'd request that you do so, please.

Mr Marchese: Speaker, you of all people obviously understand, as the Speaker in the chair at the moment, that we deal with all these issues in all these committees. You know that.

Mr Gilchrist: No, we don't.

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Mr Marchese: Sure you do. In the standing committee on finance and economic affairs — I've got all the committees in front of me — we deal with these financial issues. The income tax cut is something that comes before that committee. Jobs come in front of that committee. You know that.

These Tories talk about this income tax scheme or cut as a way of stimulating the economy. Sure, it stimulates the pockets of the wealthy but it does very little else for the others.

What I want to do is take that little money away from M. Cleghorn and M. Barrett, people I don't know but have no reason to dislike. I want to take that money that they get, the top 25% who get approximately \$1.5 billion and say: "I'm taking it away from you, sorry. It is morally wrong that you, 25% of the population, should be taking up to two billion bucks, taking it from services that are needed by the general populace."

When you give a tax cut like that and take it away —

Mr Wildman: Six per cent of the population.

Mr Marchese: Six per cent of the population and 25% of the tax break. Thank you, my friend. It leads to the same thing.

When you give that kind of \$2-billion break to that 6% of the population, you are taking money from hospitals, because that's what you did; you're taking money from schools, because that's what you did. You're taking money from people on social assistance like that measly \$37 from pregnant women who need it to keep the health of their children so they can avoid the cost down the line. You're taking away money from the environment because you say: "They can scrutinize themselves. We don't need money for people to go and scrutinize what companies are doing." You're taking away money from natural resources because you say, "We don't need firefighters up there; let the forest burn." You borrow so many billions of dollars you don't have to take from services that we need. I argue it's morally wrong.

It's not connected to this compassion that M. Harris is attempting to regain. He cannot regain what he never had.

You can't restore what you never had. You can't rebuild what you never had. You can't make a U-turn. If you are a dictatorial kind of guy, you can't change it; that's the way you are. And you, Harris, and the other minions on the other side, your minds are made up.

If the folks out there listening allow themselves to be deceived by this new game, God bless. I say you deserve Mike Harris and you deserve these other guys. But if you follow it closely, as I hope many of you do, you will say to those of us who are fighting for justice issues, for equality issues, that we need to restore the health of our system, our social health, with the balanced kind of economy we've got, because the economy has been working. You've been lucky for the last two years. Chrétien has been lucky. The economy is doing so well that all the money is coming in, even though most of you Tories and the federal Liberals have been saying, "We've got to cut social programs; that's the real burden we carry." But we know through every study we have seen that the social costs have only been 6%. The real costs have been interest rates, and 40% of it to do with tax breaks. That's what we're talking about. That's what we've got to deal with. That's why we New Democrats talk about justice for the poor and justice for the middle class that is becoming extinct under the Conservative government here in Ontario and under the Liberals federally.

We're going to have plenty of opportunity in the committees to deal with these matters, and we need to raise these issues because the public needs to see the duplicitous nature of this government, and as they see it, hopefully they will look to alternatives that speak to issues of justice, social and economic justice for all.

Mr Bisson: I'm happy to follow the speech of my good friend Rosario Marchese from Fort York and my good friend from Algoma, because they raised something in this debate that I thought was crucial to what we're talking about here.

I listened at the very beginning of the debate to the member for Durham East, who stood in the House and talked about how his government is listening. I thought the member for Algoma and the member for Fort York put that into some context and I want to follow up on some of that.

The government tries to paint this picture lately, and the member for Durham East was certainly attempting this, trying to say: "There is a new Mike Harris government in Ontario. You have a Mike Harris government today that listens," a Mike Harris government that supposedly after listening is going to make some changes and have legislation supposedly reflect what the people of Ontario would like to do. But, Mr Speaker, I see no evidence of this because of what I've seen happen in this Legislature, as you have been here for the last couple of years, on a number of very crucial bills. Let's take a look at some of the bills we dealt with at committee.

Do you remember Bill 26, Mr Speaker? Do you remember that omnibus bill that was passed in the fall of 1995 that the opposition had to force into committee because the government was trying to ram it through the

legislative process with absolutely no public hearings? Do you remember that? The members of the opposition had to barricade themselves in the Legislature to force the government to do the democratic thing. Members in the opposition, both in the Liberal and NDP opposition, didn't plan on doing that because it was some idea that it would be a lot of fun to sit in here into the next morning. We did it because as members of the opposition, as did the members in the Conservative opposition before, we believe it's important the public be part of the public legislative process, because that's what this Legislature is all about in a democracy.

This government, when it came to Bill 26, didn't want to use the entire committee process. They tried to ram that piece of legislation through, a piece of legislation that amended 152 pieces of legislation. They tried to do it by way of closure, without any debate. Only after the opposition forced the government did they give it very little time in committee to hear what had to be said.

I was a member of another committee with my good friend Mr Kormos, the member for Welland-Thorold, on Bill 84, I believe it was, which was the firefighters' bill. I remember we travelled the province of Ontario, the opposition members along with the government, listening to firefighters, to municipal representatives, to the public, to victims of fire and accident, member after member of the public, come before that committee, a standing committee of this Legislature, and say to the government: "Do not go forward with this bill. You're going in the wrong direction."

I remember those stories, they were very compelling, where people talked about how important it was to have public fire departments inside our municipalities staffed up with full-time firefighters so we can respond on time to emergencies. If not, the cost of that will be lost lives.

Did the government listen? Absolutely not. The government just did what it wanted to do. The government did as it always does, these Tories. They think they know everything. They think they've got all the answers. They think they know better than everybody else. They just rammed ahead with Bill 84, no matter what anybody had to say, even some government members of the committee.

I remember Mr Carr, who was on that committee, and the other member — I can't remember the member's riding but one of the other government members — who were kicked off the committee by Mike Harris. Why? Because all of a sudden they were starting to show that maybe they should make some amendments to this legislation based on what they heard. What did the Premier do? He kicked the parliamentary assistant out of his position and then kicked the Vice-Chair of the committee off the committee because they were starting to listen to the public.

Imagine that: A member of the Legislature listening to the public and being kicked off the committee by the Premier, members of his own caucus. And this government's going to make me believe that somehow or other they believe they're going to be listening more, somehow there's going to be a better democratic process? Do you

believe it? I don't believe it. I don't believe anybody believes it.

I remember Bill 160 that travelled through the province. The member for Algoma raised it. I remember. I was only at one of those particular committee hearings. They had the police there. The government was hiding behind the police because they were afraid of the public. Can you imagine that in a democracy a government is worried about the public? I didn't see anything inside those committees that would make me afraid. People were, yes, opposed to the legislation. People came with very strong points of view because it is a very charged issue. But I didn't see anybody out there physically threatening in any way any member of the committee, be it opposition or government. But the government wanted to have the protection of the police.

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Mr Gilchrist: It was a Liberal in the chair.

Mr Bisson: Then I hear in this House the member for Scarborough East say, "Of course, it's because it was a Liberal Chair," insinuating in some way that because a Liberal happens to sit as a Chair of a committee it's going to be biased. Excuse me. I think that calls into question the integrity of the person who happened to be the Chair of that committee.

Members of this committee from all sides of the House, from all parties, sit as chairs of committees as appointed by our leaders, and I have yet to see a government member, a Liberal member or an NDP member be biased as a Chair on any committee that I have sat on, and I have sat on a lot of committees in this House. I stand behind the decisions of the Chairs of the committees.

Interjection: You're living in a fantasyland.

Mr Bisson: You're saying that your own members are — this says it all. The government members believe that anybody who sits in the opposition who chairs a committee is biased and is going to do something to do in the government. Can you imagine? I have never heard that in this House in the two terms that I have been in here, and I only would have believed that would have possibly been said by somebody like the Tories. Unbelievable.

I remember Bill 103, another bill that appeared before a public committee. Again, people went before the committee and made presentations. Did the government listen? Not once. I remember sitting at a committee hearing in Sudbury where the isolate board of the community of Hornepayne came and made a submission to the committee about the creation of the new boards of education. Everybody agreed. The government and the opposition members agreed what the government was doing was silly. Did they listen?

Mr Gilchrist: Yes, we did. We created the board.

Mr Bisson: No, you didn't. You created the board without listening and you did nothing to address the issues of the people of Hornepayne, another example where the government —

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: They don't understand that. You wonder sometimes, Mr Speaker, why we even go through this

process. They still don't get it. This was another example where the public, represented by the people of Hornepayne who came to present to our committee, convinced the members of the committee on the government side and convinced the members of the committee on the opposition side that the legislation was wrong.

I remember listening to the Conservative members say: "Yes, we're going to have to go back to our Minister of Education and get this changed. We think you're making a very good point here." Members of the opposition do the same. When a motion is brought before the committee in order to amend the legislation, the government votes against it. Why? Because Mike Harris and the Minister of Education at the time, none other than John Snobelen, said: "Oh, no. We know better. We're smart. We have all the answers. We're not going to have to listen to anybody in the public." The member for Durham East tries to make me believe they want to travel around the province on committee in order to listen to people, to listen to what they have to say so they can take it into consideration. As I say, they don't have a very stellar record when it comes to listening.

I watched on Bill 104. Do we all remember the megacity bill? We listened.

Mr Gilchrist: Sure we do. That wasn't the megacity.

Mr Bisson: Well, which one was it?

Mr Gilchrist: Bill 103.

Mr Bisson: I stand corrected. There are so many bills in this House, but it was Bill 103, the megacity bill where they created one huge city of Toronto, which seems to be falling apart to a certain extent now as we look at how this bureaucracy that they created actually doesn't work.

The point is "the government that listens," remember? The member for Durham East starts his debate by saying: "We listen. Oh boy, do we listen. We're a kinder and gentler Mike Harris government, and we're listening."

Did they listen to the people of Toronto, did they listen to the people of Scarborough, did they listen to the people of Etobicoke when they had the referendum? Almost 70% in some cases, and over, voted in opposition; 76% in the case of Toronto voted in opposition to Bill 103. They didn't want to see megacity go forward. Did the government listen? Not one iota did they listen. They went ahead. Why? Because Mike Harris and in this case M. Leach figured they had all the answers, they're smart, nobody else, and —

Interjection: That was the old Mike.

Mr Wildman: He was completely lost.

Mr Bisson: He was. But I refer back again to the second person who spoke in this debate, the member for Durham East. I think he made a comment that really summarizes where the government is coming from. At one point — I think he was heckling when I heard this particular part — he turned around, and somebody was speaking. I think it was the member for St Catharines who was speaking on this bill.

Mr Wildman: He couldn't have been speaking.

Mr Gilchrist: Well, he's the only Liberal who listens.

Mr Bisson: Anyway, the member was speaking to the bill and was making some comments about committees, about how it works, how it's important for the government to listen to what the public has to say, and he made a comment about how the government doesn't listen.

The comment from the member for Durham East, and I wrote it down because I thought it was so interesting, was, "It's because they're wrong most of the time; we're right."

Excuse me, Mr Speaker. All of a sudden this government thinks they're the only ones who know absolutely anything about what should be happening in Ontario. Were all of the public through the megacity debate wrong? The 76% of the people who voted in opposition to the megacity, were they all wrong? According to the government they were, but I don't think so. I tend to like the idea of democracy, where people are able to express themselves and have their government listen.

Un autre exemple, c'est la Loi 99. On a fait des changements à la loi de compensation qui sont épouvantables — je répète, épouvantables — quand ça vient à ce que ça veut dire pour les travailleurs de la province de l'Ontario. Le gouvernement a fait des changements dans cette législation qui sont massifs.

Les travailleurs accidentés à travers la province, personne par personne, sont venus devant le comité à Kingston, à Toronto, à Burlington et à d'autres communautés comme Sudbury pour dire au gouvernement, «Vous allez dans la méchante direction, monsieur Harris. Vous êtes méchant. Vous êtes en train d'ôter mes bénéfices. Je suis seulement un travailleur accidenté. J'ai pas demandé d'être accidenté, c'est un accident. Et là, vous allez me punir. S'il vous plaît, ne faites pas ces changements-là.» Les experts qui sont venus devant le comité sur le projet de loi 99 ont dit, «Ne faites pas certains changements, parce que ces changements-là vont nuire au fonctionnement de la Commission des accidents du travail.» Est-ce que le gouvernement a écouté?

M. Marchese : Jamais. Ils n'écoutent pas.

M. Bisson : Jamais. Ils n'écoutent pas.

Je regarde ce qui est arrivé avec la loi de contrôle des loyers, la Loi 96. Mon bon ami M. Rosario Marchese a travaillé si fort sur ce projet de loi pour essayer de garder une protection pour les locataires de l'Ontario. Locataire après locataire, représentants municipaux et ceux des organisations sont venus devant ce comité pour demander au gouvernement, «S'il vous plaît, n'allez pas dans cette direction-là.» Ont-ils écouté ? Y a-t-il eu des amendements sur le projet de loi ? Du tout, le gouvernement n'écoute pas.

Quand le gouvernement arrive et qu'ils me disent au commencement d'un débat qu'on va faire des changements sur un comité en changeant des personnes puis changer la journée que le comité va se rencontrer et quelques manières afin que le gouvernement puisse mieux écouter, je ne suis pas convaincu. Je ne le crois pas.

I say to the government members across the way, changing the membership on the committee and the day that a committee meets is not in any way, shape or form going to do anything to change this government's attitude

when it comes to the public, this government's way — I say their way, because it is their way — of not listening to the people of Ontario. I think their record speaks for itself.

I for one am not convinced. I don't believe for one second that this government is going to get any better when it comes to listening to the people of Ontario by changing the committee membership of these particular committees and changing the days that the committees meet.

With that, I would like to leave the remainder of the time to my good friend Mr Wayne Lessard from Windsor.

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): I don't know if I'll be using up all of the time, but I do have a few things to say.

Just to follow up where my friend from Timmins left off, changing the members of the committee and changing the times that the committee meets really isn't going to change the face of this government or whether they're going to listen or not. It's kind of like changing the deck chairs on the Titanic. Is it really going to make any difference?

There are some members in this Legislature who think that if you slow down the Titanic a little bit, it is going to be a good thing. But we say you need to change the direction of the boat, because if you slow down just when you're going to hit the iceberg, that's not going to make any difference. While some may say the government is moving too far, too fast, we recognize that it's going in the wrong direction and it needs to turn around.

We hope a sign of that turnaround came during the throne speech a week or so ago, where this government says they've been listening to people and they're going to be kinder and gentler in the coming session. We can only hope that is true.

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My experience, in the short time that I've been here, is that at committees I've sat on — just a few. One was with respect to the workfare legislation, where I attended committee hearings in Ottawa, for one place, and listened to concerned, compassionate members of the community come to make presentations to that committee. They received stern lectures from members of the government when they were there to listen to what people have to say. At least if they don't agree with them, they could say: "Thank you very much for coming. We appreciate your input." But to actually lecture people who come before committees I think is wrong.

Mr Bisson: And chastise them.

Mr Lessard: And chastise them as well. It's inappropriate behaviour.

I also attended some hearings of the committee that was looking into Bill 160. I went to Chatham and St Catharines. I was with the member for Algoma when that fine woman who wanted to make a representation to the committee —

Mr Bradley: Carolyn Jones.

Mr Lessard: Carolyn Jones, the former constituency office assistant to a Conservative MPP, wanted to be heard but wasn't able to be and was escorted out of the committee hearing room and the legion hall by the security

people who were in attendance at all of the meetings of that committee. One has to wonder how committees are able to do their work; how the public feel when they come to make appearances before committees, if they're lucky enough to get on the list to make representations, and attend in committee rooms where they have to be faced with undercover officers and police officers at the doors to guard who knows what. I didn't understand why they were there.

Let's look to the future a little bit to see some of the things that the committees are going to be dealing with, that I anticipate in the coming session.

One of the things the throne speech indicated was that there were going to be some changes to apprenticeship training. We know what the government has announced with respect to apprenticeship training including tuition fees. That's one thing. As if students don't have a high enough debt load here in Ontario so far, what we want to do is add to the debt load of persons who are going to be involved in apprenticeship training. That's going to require some changes to legislation. I hope this government would ensure that they have committee hearings throughout Ontario to hear from young people about the impact that's going to have on their ability to access apprenticeship opportunities.

The government has also indicated they're going to reduce the ratio of journeymen to apprentices. It's our belief that's going to negatively impact the quality of the training that apprentices are going to receive. It's also going to have a negative impact possibly on health and safety protection to persons who are involved in the apprenticeship training programs.

I think it's important for the public to have an opportunity to express their views with respect to those sorts of changes. I would expect that if this bill were referred to committee, they would certainly come and visit Windsor, because we know there are many apprenticeship opportunities that are there in various sectors, the tool and die and the mould-making area, where there is a severe shortage of people to enter those programs. Also there is much construction that's going on there as well. There is a need for apprentices and we need to encourage young people to enter into an apprenticeship program. But one way we're not going to encourage people to take apprenticeship training programs is by raising the barriers for people to enter into those programs, by imposing tuition fees and facing students with huge debt loads after they complete their programs. That's not one way we're going to encourage people to be involved in that.

Other legislation that is probably going to committee, I would hope, is with respect to the impending breakup of Ontario Hydro. All of us recognize that there need to be some changes with respect to Ontario Hydro, especially given the problems that were revealed through the report with respect to the nuclear generating plants. Something we need to hear from the public is what impact the changes to Ontario Hydro are going to have on consumers. Is this going to mean that hydro rates are going to rise? I know the government will say that increased competition

will ensure that rates are going to go down, but how are we going to ensure that that happens? That sort of regulation needs to be in place.

What about the stranded debt? What's going to happen to that? Is that something that is going to have to be paid by consumers as an extra surcharge on their bill, so even though rates may go down there is this extra charge to deal with the stranded debt? We know that debt isn't going to disappear. Either the people who are consumers of hydro are going to pay it or the rest of the taxpayers generally are going to end up getting stuck with that bill. That's certainly not something I would like to see happen.

We also want to know what this government plans to do with nuclear reactors. Are those going to be permitted to be sold to the private sector or are they going to be retained in the public sector? I think people have legitimate concerns about safety when it comes to the ownership and operation of nuclear reactors, and that's something the public need to be heard on by committee in the upcoming session.

We also know there is going to be a switch or an encouragement to lower-cost power. How that power is going to be generated at a lower cost is probably through cheap, coal-fired plants. I'm concerned about the impact that's going to have on the environment. We know there are emission caps with respect to greenhouse gases for Ontario Hydro, but what if people are permitted to purchase their hydro from outside Ontario, for example, and purchase it from somebody who has a coal-fired plant in the Ohio valley? We don't have any emission caps on generators of hydro in the Ohio valley.

We know in Windsor, for example, that a lot of the air pollution from the Ohio valley just comes right up that valley, right past the city of Windsor, and we end up having to deal with the environmental fallout. That was something that was the subject of the Environmental Commissioner's report last week. I know you'll recall that, where the Minister of Environment, Norm Sterling, and the rest of the ministers as well, were admonished by the Environmental Commissioner for their total lack of commitment with respect to the protection of the environment.

Unless there are those environmental controls when we see the breakup of Ontario Hydro, we really have some serious concerns about the impact that's going to have on the environment and the impact it's going to have on our health. We know that 1,800 people, by the admission of the Minister of Environment, die each year as a result of air pollution. We're going to be faced with the prospect of the deregulation or the privatization of the hydro business, and we fear this spirit of "open up the gates," wide-open, free-market, free-enterprise generation of electricity is going to have a negative impact on environmental standards and on air quality as well. That's something I believe the members of the public should have some input on.

I hope this government is listening. I hope the changes that are being made with respect to committee membership

and the times they meet is going to have an impact, but I'm not optimistic.

Mr Crozier: I want to take just a few minutes tonight to make a couple of comments with regard to government motions 3 and 4. First of all, I think back to the speech of the member for Durham East, when he mentioned how the government listens and how they've gone all across this province and travelled highways all across this province. With the downloading that has gone to municipalities and counties, I find it difficult to find a highway that goes all the way across this province, with the exception perhaps of Highway 401. The highways are disappearing in Essex county. The major employer in Essex county is now not on a major highway, because it has been downloaded to the municipality. So I'm not so sure that in listening and in travelling across this province, the government would be able to travel on highways.

2050

We talk about listening to constituents. I recall as well that it was reported in a local newspaper that the member for Durham East said early on in this government's mandate that he had some second thoughts about even being the member, because he was tired of listening to his constituents complaining about what the government was doing. That's part of listening: You have to listen to what your constituents like and you have to listen to what they don't like.

There are some members in this House, as a matter of fact, whose constituents have to make an appointment; their constituents have to outline in a one-pager what they want to talk to them about. There are others in this Legislature who have what you would call an open-door policy. In Essex South when I'm in the office, if I don't have an appointment with somebody at that time in particular and a constituent comes in, they come right in the door and sit down and talk about it. That's the way we should listen.

Listening has been mentioned earlier this evening by others. We think of the megacity and the vote that was taken in the city, the referendum. An overwhelming majority didn't want the megacity, yet did the government listen? I think not. Now the government may in fact bring in referendum legislation. That's a little bit too late. You just don't bring it in after you've passed major pieces of legislation such as the megacity legislation.

I now want to get to the three committees I want to speak about. On one I'll give the example of how the committee system works, and works well, and that is the justice committee. We went through hearings across this province where the government was bringing in legislation that would put 20,000 video slot machines in every backyard, on every street, in every town in this province. We went from town to town, and people told them they didn't want the crack cocaine of gambling in their backyards, they told them they didn't want these 44 casinos in their backyards, and they continue to tell them they don't want these casinos in their backyards. But it worked on the justice committee, because now, notwithstanding the fact that the legislation was passed, the government is thinking twice about these video slot machines. They're thinking

twice about putting the crack cocaine of gambling in every community across this province.

The interesting thing is that at the time of the hearings you wouldn't have thought the government was going to consider anything. They had their legislation and it was going to be passed. In fact, we came back to the hearings in Toronto, the clause-by-clause, and we made amendments to the piece of legislation that would have limited these VLTs to only controlled gambling areas; for example, racetracks. Those amendments were turned down. In the four years that I've been here, I can't recall a piece of this government's legislation where they've accepted amendments. I guess if it doesn't fit their pattern, it just isn't acceptable.

We tried on the VLT legislation to limit those to only controlled gambling areas, but I'm glad to see now, after the committee hearings, after clause-by-clause, after passing the legislation that will still allow them to be in every corner of this province, they have decided — at least they've announced publicly that they've decided — that they're not going to have 20,000 VLTs in the province. I hope they stick to that, notwithstanding the fact that the legislation still allows it.

The government agencies committee has been alluded to earlier this evening by the member for Fort York. I was on government agencies for several years, and if ever there was a committee that doesn't work the way it's intended, it's the government agencies committee.

For those who may be watching and would like to know, every member gets a list of government appointments to various boards, agencies and commissions. The government agencies committee then can call these appointees before the committee and scrutinize their appointment. I am sorry to say that that committee is merely a rubber stamp for the appointment of friends of the government.

In fact, I said to the member for London South at the government agencies committee one day: "Look, member, what I seem to see here is that all the appointments that are being made by the government are going to pass whether we want them to or not; they're going to be accepted whether we want them to or not, and in addition to that they're all friends of the government." He wouldn't say it on the record, but I got a nod across the room that acknowledged that this is pretty much the way it is. I would have thought that the government agencies committee was one that could scrutinize whether that proposed member is fit for the job.

I have no qualms, if anyone is qualified for that job, that it's then the government's right, and well they should propose whom they want to fill that position. But when you question the capability of an individual, whether the individual has the experience, whether, to use a word that's been used in the Legislature today, they might even have the compassion to deal with the issues that come before a particular committee, and then simply to have the government say, "I'm sorry, it doesn't matter, we're voting for it and that's the end of it" — as a matter of fact, we all know that it really doesn't matter whether or not the

government agencies committee accepts that nomination, it's still the prerogative of the Premier to appoint that person in any event.

Finally, I'd like to have a word about the social development committee. Today in Windsor we, the Liberal opposition, held a news conference headed up by Dwight Duncan, and Pat Hoy, the member for Essex-Kent, and myself, where we said that our health care is not for sale in Ontario. This is something that I think should come before the social development committee and be debated, because what's happening in Ontario today is that our health care is for sale. We're not going to let it happen if it's at all possible, if there's anything we can do about it as an opposition. That's why I think there should be a public debate on it.

Speaker, it would interest you to know that up until now not-for-profit caregivers such as the VON have given magnificent quality care to the residents of Ontario, but as of today 30% of that care can be doled out to private agencies. I don't agree with that. I have elderly people in my riding who have been served by the VON, for example, for years. They trust the VON. The VON gives quality care. They like the VON. Now we're going to find that it's going to be turned over to private companies.

Mr Gravelle: It's going to get worse next year.

Mr Crozier: My friend from Port Arthur says it's going to get worse next year, because now it's 30%, then it

will go to 60%, then it will go to 100%. Some would predict that the Victorian Order of Nurses won't exist in this province in five years, and that's a shame. I think a major change in the care given to the citizens of Ontario such as that should be brought before the social development committee, or one of the major committees of the Legislature, and debated before that can happen without the citizens of the province having an opportunity to say how they feel.

There I've given you a quick view of only three of the committees: one that works, one that doesn't work and one that should be given the work so that the citizens of Ontario can have a say in their health care future.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? No.

Mrs Cunningham moved government notice of motion number 3. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Mrs Cunningham has moved government notice of motion number 4. Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? It is carried.

Hon Isabel Bassett (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): Mr Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

The House adjourned at 2101.

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of Ontario**

Second Session, 36th Parliament

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Tuesday 5 May 1998

Mardi 5 mai 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 5 May 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 5 mai 1998

*The House met at 1328.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NORTHERN VEHICLE REGISTRATION TAX

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Those of us living in the north hope that today's budget won't be any worse than last year's. We won't forget that the only new tax imposed by Mike Harris was one imposed on northerners with the institution of the northern vehicle registration tax.

After that budget last year, there was a huge outcry from the people in the north saying that this new tax was wrong, that it was unfair, that it was mean-spirited and that it was the act of a government that simply didn't understand the extra costs of operating a vehicle in northern Ontario. But our pleas fell on deaf ears. Mike Harris and the Tories weren't listening.

The people from the north started a postcard campaign. Thousands upon thousands of people in the north signed these postcards telling Mike Harris that the new tax was wrong and would cost us millions of dollars. But our postcard campaign fell on deaf ears. Mike Harris and the Tories weren't listening.

But this year's edition of Mike Harris is supposed to be a kinder and gentler one, one that listens. Well, will you admit today, Premier, that your new tax on northerners was wrong and that you will withdraw that tax in your new budget this year, or will you be the same old Mike Harris who says he listens but really doesn't hear? Premier, you have a chance to prove to northern Ontarians that you're listening and that you care. Axe the tax, Mike, today.

HEALTH CARDS

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I'm rising today to discuss yet again the question of the Harris government's insistence that every person seeking medical care within the province now have on their person a valid health card.

We have raised this issue again and again, that in fact this demand for a valid health card actually in a person's hand is causing real difficulty, real barriers to the health care to which every resident of this province is entitled.

Those who are working in hospitals, in doctors' offices, in medical laboratories, who are dealing with people who

for one reason or another do not have their cards with them, the outcry from those health care professionals about the barrier to access to health care is growing.

This government excuses its behaviour on the ground of fraud. The citizens of this province feel it is inappropriate for the government to assume that people are always trying to defraud it. That's the opinion this government obviously has. Children who may not have a health card with them when they're visiting with relatives, street people who may not have identification that enables them to get cards and those who have had their wallets stolen may not have cards and may not be able to get the medical care they need.

RECYCLING IN NORTHUMBERLAND

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): On April 23, 1998, the county of Northumberland received a Silver Municipal Award from the Recycling Council of Ontario. The RCO's Silver Municipal Award is given to municipalities that achieve waste reduction targets that are higher than the generally accepted standard. Municipalities achieve these targets through comprehensive reduce, reuse and recycle programs.

The residents of Northumberland and the waste management staff at the county are certainly to be congratulated for their collective effort in reducing the amount of municipal and business waste generated in Northumberland.

While recognizing the county of Northumberland for its recycling efforts, it is also important to mention that this is Pitch-In Week. Pitch-In Week is now in its 30th year in some parts of Canada. Hundreds of communities in Ontario are participating in activities that promote the importance of recycling, such as cleaning up waterways and highways and removing garbage from school yards and parks.

Communities such as Northumberland are to be commended for pitching in to promote a cleaner and healthier environment.

I certainly hope that all members of this House will encourage recycling in their communities, not only during Pitch-In Week, but also throughout the whole year.

SAINTS CYRIL AND METHODIUS UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On Saturday, May 2, 1998, a very important ceremony was held in St Catharines as Saints Cyril and Methodius Ukrainian

Catholic Church was designated as a historic site. The church, which was named after ninth-century Slavic missionaries, was designated under the Ontario Heritage Act in 1998 because of its historical and architectural significance to our community.

The first Ukrainian immigrants arrived in St Catharines between 1912 and 1914, and a significant number of settlers from Ukraine came to our area in the 1930s. This growing community required a permanent place of worship and in 1943 the existing site on the path of the third Welland Canal was acquired.

Construction of the cross-shaped church took place between 1944 and 1946, utilizing plans prepared by Rev Phillip Ruh, a German missionary and architect-builder. The style is Byzantine Revival, which is typified by domes, decorative brickwork and stone arches. Under the care of Rev Dr Mykola Komar from 1962 to the present, the interior phase was completed, exemplifying the rich religious and artistic gifts offered to us by the eastern church.

The entire community of St Catharines celebrates this heritage designation, so special for the congregation of Saints Cyril and Methodius Ukrainian Catholic Church.

WOMEN'S ISSUES

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): "Gender Gap Widening for Tories." This is the title of Jim Coyle's column in today's Toronto Star. I suggest everybody take a look at this, as on the day of Ernie Eves's budget we expect to hear some very fine language today to try to close that gender gap. I would suggest that people read, as Jim Coyle is suggesting in his column, a book that was just released by Sylvia Bashevkin. It is called *Women on the Defensive: Living Through Conservative Times*.

To quote from Mr Coyle's article: "Of course, today's budget will doubtless seek to address the gender gap which is by now so well-documented and so potentially fatal. But Bashevkin is not terribly hopeful."

We have seen the Premier of this government blame pregnant women on welfare, taking away their food allowance, saying they just spend it on beer. We have seen the welfare cuts that have drastically affected women and their children. We have seen education and health budgets cut, which have affected women negatively, and on and on.

No wonder there is a gender gap. We don't want to just hear fine language today. We want to see some of that money reinvested for the sake of women and children.

CHRIS ROBERTSON

Mr Trevor Pettit (Hamilton Mountain): I am pleased to take this opportunity today to give recognition to a very special Hamilton Mountain resident, Chris Robertson, who undertook a most interesting journey recently.

Several weeks ago, I had the pleasure of attending a pro-Canada rally at Mohawk College in my home town of

Hamilton. The rally was organized and inspired by Chris Robertson, who had recently returned from an extraordinary trip and who wanted to spend an evening describing to his neighbours and fellow Hamilton citizens his experience of the magnificent physical beauty of this country. He wanted to describe to them what he encountered when he cycled 6,520 kilometres from Point Pelee, the most southern part of mainland Canada, to Tuktoyaktuk on the Arctic Ocean. He is the first person in history to go from the bottom of Canada to the top by his own power.

What Chris told us that evening was this: Canada is a country whose natural beauty we must celebrate more as Canadians, it is a country whose natural beauty we must show to our children, and it is a country whose natural beauty is the envy of most of the world.

Chris Robertson's To the Top Canada Expedition was undertaken because he was concerned about the unity of this country and because he believed that we as Canadians must be more outspoken in expressing our pride in Canada.

On behalf of my constituents high atop scenic Hamilton Mountain, I congratulate Chris for his courageous journey cycling across this magnificent country and thank him for educating us on how and why it is important to show our pride in Canada.

Fellow members, please welcome a great Canadian, Chris Robertson, who is with us in the members' gallery today.

RURAL AND NORTHERN PHYSICIAN SHORTAGE

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): I am delighted by the Premier's dramatic flip-flop on hepatitis C. I have many constituents for whom I have been fighting for justice. The Premier has finally learned that he is vulnerable. Self-interest has taught him how to do the right thing. The Dionne sisters have taught him how to do the right thing.

1340

Now I'm calling on the Premier to do the right thing for rural and northern communities which are seriously short of physicians and specialists. A year and a half ago, the Premier pledged \$36.4 million per year for three years. That money has not been spent. The quality of health care in northern and rural communities is being threatened by the lack of doctors.

Keep your promise, Premier. Communities in my area like Thamesville, Blenheim, Belle River, Rochester, Maidstone and Tilbury have been fighting to attract new doctors without any help whatsoever from the Harris government. I have called on this government time and time again for assistance: Lift the freeze on community health care funding. Provide a salary fund for nurse practitioners to help doctors in rural areas. Find the money in your budget, Premier. We need doctors now.

PHYLLIS McAVOY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): It's with a very heavy heart that I rise today and advise members of the death of Mrs Phyllis McAvoy. I know that members will recall the plight of Mrs McAvoy, whose son was killed on February 13, 1991, but as a result of a plea-bargaining process there was a conviction for a much lesser charge and the result of that court case clearly left the law saying that her son had committed suicide.

She refused to accept that and fought for years, with the help of Hamilton Spectator reporter Jim Holt and regional chairman Terry Cooke, who was then chair of the police services board, to get a coroner's inquest into the death. Indeed, that finally happened and the inquest proved that someone else caused the murder and that in fact the murder scene had been altered.

We then spent, along with her lawyer Ray Harris, the next couple of years trying to get back for Mrs McAvoy — who was a very ordinary working person who couldn't afford the cost of all that money and all those legal fees. To the credit of the sitting Attorney General, we worked and reached a settlement that gave her at least that peace of mind and it was just resolved a little while ago.

It's a shame that she didn't have more time to enjoy the peace that bringing a final resolution to this would have. Mrs McAvoy was an exceptional person, and I feel very honoured to have had an opportunity to have been even a small part of her life.

MILTON MERCHANTS HOCKEY TEAM

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to congratulate the Milton Junior A hockey team, the Milton Merchants, on becoming the all-Ontario hockey series champion.

On April 24, the Merchants won their final game in a six-game series against the defending provincial champion Rayside-Balfour Sabrecats.

The hard work and dedication of the Milton Merchants has finally paid off. Their triumphant 4-2 series win over the Sabrecats gave them the honour of representing central Canada at the 1998 Royal Bank Cup in Nanaimo, BC, formerly known as the Centennial Cup.

Their back-to-back overtime victories in the last couple of games in the series were truly a team effort, and I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Milton Merchants on this dramatic win.

I want to personally congratulate team leader Jeff Haydar, his brother Darren, who was named the most sportsman-like player of the all-Ontario finals, and also Jarrett Rose, who won the most valuable player award. I'd like to also recognize coach Marty Williamson, team owner Brad Grant and the whole team for their commitment to Canada's national sport.

I know all the members of the House will want to join me in congratulating the Milton Merchants for their first-ever all-Ontario championship win and wish them good luck in BC in their quest for the Centennial Cup.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CRACKDOWN ON ILLEGAL
WASTE DUMPING ACT, 1998LOI DE 1998 SUR LA PRISE
DE MESURES DE RÉPRESSION
À L'ÉGARD DE LA MISE EN DÉCHARGE
ILLÉGALE DE DÉCHETS

Mr Wildman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 13, An Act to Crack Down on Illegal Waste Dumping by amending the Environmental Protection Act, the Ontario Water Resources Act and the Pesticides Act /
Projet de loi 13, Loi réprimant sévèrement la mise en décharge illégale de déchets en modifiant la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement, la Loi sur les ressources en eau de l'Ontario et la Loi sur les pesticides.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Short comment?

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): The bill amends the Environmental Protection Act, the EPA, the Ontario Water Resources Act and the Pesticides Act to combat the illegal depositing of waste. Specific amendments are made to the EPA, and all three statutes are amended to facilitate enforcement and increase penalties.

Provisions of the EPA that deal with the depositing of waste and with orders for waste removal are broadened and a power to make restitution orders is added.

Provisions that allow the seizure and suspension or detention of vehicle permits and plates are expanded.

The category of documents that may be used as evidence is also broadened.

CITY OF KITCHENER ACT, 1998

Mr Wettlaufer moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr15, An Act respecting The Corporation of the City of Kitchener.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

MUNICIPAL AMENDMENT ACT
(SIMCOE DAY), 1998LOI DE 1998 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES MUNICIPALITÉS
(FÊTE DE SIMCOE)

Mr Gilchrist moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 14, An Act to amend the Municipal Act to name Civic Holiday as Simcoe Day /
Projet de loi 14, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les municipalités en vue de désigner le Congé civique sous le nom de fête de Simcoe.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Short comment?

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): This bill would seek to change the Municipal Act so that every municipality in Ontario would recognize the contribution that was made by Lord Graves Simcoe, as has just been done by Sarnia city council and has been done previously by the city of Toronto. We think it worthy of recognition across all of Ontario in deference to the role played by the British and Lord Graves Simcoe in particular.

REDEEMER REFORMED CHRISTIAN COLLEGE ACT, 1998

Mr Skarica moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr17, An Act respecting Redeemer Reformed Christian College.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

ORAL QUESTIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

Mr Bernard Grandmaître (Ottawa East): My question is to the Minister of Health. Madam Minister, your health care restructuring commission removed more than \$120 million of services in health care in the Ottawa-Carleton area, and on Friday, with great fanfare, you reinvested \$45 million to create 1,300 long-term-care beds, but over eight years. To make matters worse, the first 300 beds won't be in place by the year 1999.

Don't you realize that we have at the present time a waiting list of more than 1,400 people? Our senior citizens are the fastest-growing population in all of Ontario. My colleagues in Ottawa-Carleton and the district health council are disappointed in your announcement. Would you not agree with the member for Ottawa-Rideau, Mr Guzzo, who says that 1,300 beds is inadequate? Will you do the right thing and provide us with more beds?

1350

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): I think it's important that we put this into the appropriate perspective. As you know, the Health Services Restructuring Commission in its advice indicated that there was a need in the Ottawa area for 1,016 new long-term-care beds and also an investment of \$23 million annually in long-term-care services. Our recent commitment was beyond the expectations and the recommendations of the commission, and we have actually committed 1,313 new beds and more than \$36 million in new annual funding. That exceeds the recommendations of the commission.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I guess what's important to understand is that there are not 14,000 people on waiting —

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Supplementary.

M. Grandmaître: Madame la ministre, pour vous corriger, c'est 1400 personnes. Je n'ai jamais parlé de 14 000.

Je suis content d'entendre aujourd'hui que M. Guzzo — c'est complètement faux. Alors, les gens d'Ottawa-Carleton encore une fois ont été induits en erreur par M. Guzzo et par vous-même. Lorsque vous questionnez la liste d'attente de 1400 personnes, le Conseil de santé d'Ottawa-Carleton encore n'a pas raison.

Madame la ministre, faites la bonne chose. Ajoutez les lits nécessaires, qu'on attend depuis toujours dans la région d'Ottawa-Carleton.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would agree that certainly you do need the beds, and as you know, we're trying to ensure that the beds are going to be provided as quickly as possible.

I'd like to clear up some of the misconceptions around the waiting list. Indications are that there are 1,300 or 1,400, whatever number, on the waiting list. I'd just like to break that down as to what's actually happening.

At the end of February the Ministry of Health did a survey. The indication is that of that total, 438 individuals are already in a long-term-care facility and are looking for a transfer to another facility, so they already have a bed. Another 165 individuals who should be in a long-term-care facility are in an acute care or chronic care facility, so they already are receiving the required care; they're simply not in the appropriate facility. We have a further 733 individuals who are listed as being in the community waiting for a bed. This number includes those put on a waiting list through the community care access centres because there is a future anticipation that they will need a bed.

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon Mrs Witmer: This number also includes people who are being serviced in their own homes with long-term-care services but who over the longer period of time will need —

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): The crisis in health care in Ottawa-Carleton continues. Last December, the Ottawa-Carleton Community Care Access Centre got an emergency \$3-million infusion from your ministry to stave off draconian cuts to its 17,000 clients who require home care: the frail and sick elderly, hospital patients and the disabled.

The community care access centre's fiscal year ended, as you know, in March, and it has submitted a new budget requesting these funds plus \$2.7 million to accommodate additional caseload growth as a result of both hospital cutbacks and an aging population. In support of that, there are letters from the Parkinson's Society of Ottawa-Carleton, the Muscular Dystrophy Association, the Nepean Community Resource Centre, Carlington Community Health Services, multiple sclerosis. All these agencies, whose clients require home care services, are asking this ministry to confirm that funding.

Will you today provide confirmation not only that the \$3 million will become part of the permanent budget, but

that caseload growth, the demand for an additional \$2.7 million, will be accommodated for this year?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Obviously the member didn't hear the announcement of last week, where our government indicated that we were going to be investing a total of an additional \$551 million into community-based services. We are well aware of the increased need for services. As you know, each year we have been increasing the amount of money that is available for the CCACs and it is totally consistent with the needs of the population in that community. We are the first government to recognize the need for community-based services and we are continuing to increase budgets each and every year, consistent with the needs of the community.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I would like to request permission for the member for Ottawa-Rideau to ask another supplementary on this.

The Speaker: The member for St Catharines is seeking unanimous consent for the member for Ottawa-Rideau to ask a supplementary. Agreed? I heard a "No."

FIREFIGHTING IN NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): My question is for the Chair of Management Board. The Chair of Management Board is the person who is responsible for the mess we find ourselves in, in terms of forest fires in the north today.

Minister, you will remember that after my colleagues and I toured the northwest fire centre in Dryden, I alerted you of the dry conditions and the early explosive fire season that we would be seeing in the northwest because of the lack of snow over this past winter. You will know, being that we have a very dry spring in the northwest, that we have been caught in a situation where the fires are burning out of control. I ask you, why were you not ready for the dry spring in the north and the fires that we are facing today, the things I had asked you to be ready for later on in the winter?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I appreciate the question. As you know, the Minister of Natural Resources has been in the area yesterday and again today looking at the situation at first hand. I just want to say that our firefighters are the best in the world. They're doing a tremendous job. They're fully prepared. There are 27 fires being actioned right now and they are all being actioned to some extent. We realize the situation is tense. We realize that there are weather conditions that no one can predict, but our forces are prepared.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary?

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): Thunder Bay fire 21 is raging out of control and has tripled in size over the last 24 hours. It has forced the evacuation of Gull Bay and it has cut off access to Armstrong. There are many people in northwestern Ontario who want to aid in the

firefighting effort, 18 of whom are trained firefighters from Gull Bay First Nation, the community under siege right now, yet your privatization of forest firefighting and your drastic cutbacks in fire crews and fire stations two years ago, which we consistently warned you about, have hampered the ability of these trained people and countless others to join the firefighting effort. Can you assure us today that all those who are properly trained will be put to work immediately, and will you allow the many other northerners who want to help to get to work as soon as possible to help here?

Hon Mr Hodgson: As the members opposite know, the Minister of Natural Resources is in the area right now and he is reviewing it. That's why he can't be with us in the House. But I can tell you that the Ontario government, this Mike Harris government, has the best firefighters in the world and we have communities that are —

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): We all knew it was going to be dry. Fire them all.

The Speaker: Order.

Hon Mr Hodgson: We have had a couple of seasons of high fire activity. I just want to assure the House and all the people who may be watching this on television that we have not reduced the number of crews this year or last year. The major reduction in firefighting took place when the opposition was in power, and that is the truth. We can go back through the numbers. Our government also has just invested —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Hold on. I can't hear the answer, folks.

1400

Hon Mr Hodgson: We have well-trained crews that are doing their best right now under very extreme conditions. We have also, as a government, invested \$200 million on new water bombers with more capacity. Unlike previous governments that let our infrastructure run down, we're making the proper investments to solve and try to help the situation in northwestern Ontario right now.

The Speaker: Final supplementary?

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): Minister, you just don't get it. This climax situation is not news. It could have and should have been anticipated. Northern Alberta is on fire. People in northern Saskatchewan and northern Manitoba are praying for rain. The northeast is drying out in Ontario. There aren't going to be crews from other jurisdictions to come and help; they've got their own problems. You should have bolstered our ability for first strikes and got our manpower hired so that we could attack those forest fires immediately.

Everybody in the province knew this was happening — as a matter of fact, everybody in North America did — and you did nothing. The minister is up there now. He should have been up there three months ago getting ready for what was inevitable.

People are losing their communities, their livelihoods, their opportunities for recreation. Millions upon millions of dollars in timber are going to go up in smoke. Get with

it. Get up there. Commit the resources. Hire the people. Let's address the situation with more than words.

Hon Mr Hodgson: We are addressing the situation with more than words. We've put actions in place that allow for better training of our initial attack crews in response to suggestions by some local members from that area a couple of years ago. They wanted to make sure that more local people got trained and got access to fight our fires. We've done that.

We've also made the investment in water bombers, a huge investment that other governments didn't have the courage to do, all for the sake of making sure we have the best firefighting capability in the world. Our preparedness will stand up against any other jurisdiction.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I'd like to take this opportunity, in the government members' gallery, to introduce the former member for St George, Mr Allan Lawrence. Welcome.

FIREFIGHTING IN NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): My question is also to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. The fact is that last winter we had very little in the way of snow. Last fall we had very little by way of rain. This spring it's extremely dry. The fact is, you're the minister who oversaw the dismantling of the Ministry of Natural Resources. You fired 50% of the staff of that ministry and laid off, two years ago, a great part of the fire protection crews that were there to fight the fires.

The question I ask you, Minister, is the same question that people across northeastern and northwestern Ontario are asking: Are you prepared to do the right thing? Are you prepared to make sure that we have the crews in place to properly protect our communities during the spring fire season?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): Yes. The Minister of Natural Resources is up there right now and the minister and the ministry staff are doing everything with the tools this government has allowed them to have in terms of a bumped-up initial attack, taking advantage of technology. We got rid of tying up resources in outdated fire stations, where people had to sit in a tower. We have sophisticated satellites that can identify when fires are starting.

We've known that we're facing unusual weather circumstances. To respond to the opposition, we have invested again this year up to \$200 million for new water bombers. There are four of them in action right now. That's a major investment to help this situation, and we're taking those steps.

Mr Bisson: You don't seem to get it. I have to say what my good friend from Nipigon said: You sit there as northern Ontario quite possibly can burn.

You're the minister who shut down 18 fire centres across northern Ontario. Those fire centres were there for a reason: So that we had people onsite, close by, who were ready to go out and fight fires when they did come up. We've been lucky up to now; we've managed to suppress the fires that have started.

Our fear is quite simply this: If we don't have the manpower in place, if we don't have the crews that are necessary to fight these fires onsite at the proper time, they're not going to be able to suppress those fires when they start, and literally parts of northeastern and northwestern Ontario can burn.

I ask you again, will you do the right thing and ensure that the necessary crews are in place to fight fires as they start across the fire season this year?

Hon Mr Hodgson: Yes. That's what our changes have allowed us to do in the last two years.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Final supplementary.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Minister, for as long as the sun shines and the river flows, you shall have forest fires. It's a phenomenon. The riding of Lake Nipigon is 26% of the overall land mass of the province, extending all the way to Hudson Bay, nestled between Lake Superior and Lake Nipigon. Get it?

People in Gull Bay, a native community, are isolated. There is nowhere to go. There is no more a lifeline. They wish to go to work to save their resources, to save their belongings and maybe themselves. They are presently unemployed. You have the jurisdictional capacity and the duty. Find the fortitude to put those people to work. Give them a chance to live. Will you make that commitment today?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I will take that under advisement. I'm sure the Minister of Natural Resources will respond to that when he comes back.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): My question is to the Minister of Health. Yesterday, a couple of my Liberal colleagues were in Windsor trying to make themselves out to be great friends of public health care by slamming your privatization plans. The only problem is that it's the federal Liberal government that has been encouraging your actions by cutting billions of dollars in transfer payments towards health care.

Your government is privatizing health care. You're Americanizing it.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. The member for Sudbury, come to order.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): You should be nervous, Lessard.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I heard you were the loudest in Windsor.

The Speaker: Attorney General. The member for Durham East, I'm certain that's not your seat. The member for Windsor-Riverside.

Mr Lessard: Is it over, Speaker?

Minister, you're privatizing health care in Ontario, you're Americanizing it, and you're forcing out community-based, not-for-profit agencies like the Victorian Order of Nurses. We think you're not moving too far, too fast, like my Liberal colleagues have been saying, but you're going in the wrong direction.

What have you done to demand that the federal Liberals, in the face of their budget surpluses, restore their cuts to health care transfer payments to the province of Ontario?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): In response to the question from the member opposite, I would certainly indicate to you that we are not privatizing health care. In fact, yesterday I received a letter from someone within the VON congratulating us on our announcement last week. There has been a tremendous response.

Last week, as you will know, we made an announcement of \$1.2 billion. We have taken action to respond to the changing needs of our aging population. Last week we invested money into 20,000 new long-term-care beds. We invested and will be renovating 13,000 older beds in order that they meet the same high standards and that people in those old facilities will have the same quality of life as elsewhere. We are certainly moving forward without the federal government in order to provide the services and the level of funding needed.

Mr Lessard: Minister, you didn't answer my question. You may be hearing from different people than we are. New Democrats have been consulting with the public across Ontario. We've been using this document, Condition Critical! The Future of Health Care. We're calling in that document for the expansion of the guarantees under the Canada Health Act to cover home care services. People are telling us — patients, health care workers, families of people who need care — that they are afraid that with the move you're making to home care, they won't have those guarantees, now that it's not publicly funded.

They are worried that your government is privatizing health care through the back door. We think they're right to be worried. The Canada Health Act only guarantees full public funding and universal access for services provided by hospitals and doctors. With home care, there are no such guarantees. Will you do what the NDP has called for and commit to gradually expand the guarantees in the Canada Health Act to cover home care and ensure seniors receive the quality care they deserve?

Hon Mrs Witmer: The minister with responsibility for seniors will take that.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]): I'd like to advise the member opposite that it was his government that delisted home care services from the OHIP formulary in Ontario. I'd like to remind the member opposite that at the recent conference in Halifax,

the first ever national conference on home care, Ontario was the only province that sent an elected representative to protect our seniors, because the federal Liberal government is not talking about a universally accessible home care system; it's talking about the fact that home care in this country is provided on the basis of a user fee, a co-pay, some kind of means test. The only two provinces that don't have this kind of a co-pay are Ontario and Manitoba, both Conservative provinces. We'll continue to provide home care that way in this country.

1410

Mr Lessard: The minister is just talking through his hat. The New Democrats never delisted home care services under OHIP. People in Windsor and across the province are worried that the cost of home care is going to fall on them and their elderly parents or their children. They're concerned there will be no guarantees of quality, despite the assurances from the Minister of Health.

I have a letter from J.W. Payne. He's the director of finance and administration for the Windsor-Essex Community Care Access Centre. This letter is in response to my request to see the agreements between the CCAC and the long-term home care providers. They've told me I can't have that agreement because it's confidential.

How can we trust that the standards are going to be there when we can't see those legal agreements? How can we know that your government isn't saying one thing publicly and entering into agreements privately with private home care providers? What are you trying to hide? Will you commit today to make all legal agreements that the government signs with home care providers public so that we can see what's really going on with the restructuring of health care services?

Hon Mr Jackson: I want to advise the member opposite that for years in Ontario we had an unregulated system of home care that was operated on a monopoly basis, administered by the government. Today in Ontario we have a community based system, with citizens participating on the boards. In Windsor there are 10 or 11 community members serving on that board, making the decisions. We as a province and the taxpayers transfer to them millions of dollars and they acquire the services, sign the contracts and ensure that the service is delivered by professional, competent nursing staff for nursing care and homemaking staff for homemaking services. Those services are provided with standards for the first time in this province, with a local board held accountable. Those contracts are reviewed by the legal department of those community based centres. In Windsor, it's the Windsor-Essex Community Care Access Centre.

We're proud of a system that is able to monitor patient satisfaction and professional delivery of service. It's the first time that has occurred in this province. We're very proud that we've been able to implement it.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): My question is for the Minister of Education. Under your government's

education funding formula, the new Ottawa-Carleton District School Board — that is a forced amalgamation, as you know — is told that it now has 1.6 million square feet of surplus space in schools that are actively used and occupied by students. That requires the board to close as many as 13 elementary schools and seven high schools.

Under your funding formula, the government will not recognize any reductions of surplus space that happen after September 1998. This gives the board a little over five months of planning time for any sales, any adjustments, any new plans on students and families that are disrupted. What is the logic of this, that this will not be recognized after September 1998? What is the reason for that?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): The logic of the funding formula in general is to focus, and space is the same but all particulars of the funding formula, to ensure that the money is spent in the classroom on the teachers, on the textbooks, on every aspect of in the classroom, which is important to the students in Ontario. In terms of space, this government wants to ensure there is an adequate amount of space for the students and for the teachers. But the province of Ontario does not feel the taxpayers should be funding space beyond what is adequate for the needs of the classroom.

Mr Patten: Minister, you haven't answered the question. If you ran a business and you had 20 facilities in which to sell and accommodate and rejig the staffing arrangements to occupy that space somewhere else, would you do it in a five-month period? No, you wouldn't; I'm sure you wouldn't. You talk about common sense. The Ottawa-Carleton board has a desperate need for space in outlying areas. What you've effectively done is pitted inner schools against suburbia and rural areas, causing communities to fight communities for that kind of space.

It's going to mean more busing, more transportation. We hear there's a likelihood of a drop in transportation. I'm going to ask you: Will you at least extend that particular deadline, and it's not just this school board, it's every board that has this problem across the province, so they can make the kind of planning decisions on a rational basis that will consider these, let alone you're going to be causing and adding to the decay of inner cities, certainly in the Ottawa area?

Hon David Johnson: The Ministry of Education is currently in the process of taking an inventory of space with all the boards. The Ottawa board would be a case in point. We're working very closely with the Ottawa officials to determine the exact parameters of the space they have. This is taking place at the present time. My expectation is that somewhere within about a month this process will be completed. Then we will know what we're talking about.

In terms of the deadline, the school boards are able to dispose of properties either before or after September. If they dispose of it now, then it doesn't count in their inventory. If they dispose of it after September 1, then they have the benefit of taking the money from any school

or any property they dispose of — and indeed if it's administrative and we're asking them to dispose of their administrative properties first, but any property — and they can take that money and build a school where they need it.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is to the minister responsible for children's issues. I have a serious concern that the Minister of Health and the minister responsible for seniors' issues, in overseeing the establishment of community care access centres, have overlooked the importance of specialized children's services. I know you're aware of the problem this has created.

There are some community care access centres in the province that are sending out tender documents that have a pre-qualification saying, "Any service provider bidding on the contract must have the ability to provide cradle-to-grave services." This is not acceptable and it should be a matter of provincial policy to prohibit such pre-qualification.

You know the importance of specialized children's services in the area of physiotherapy, speech pathology, paediatric services. It is not acceptable that these specialized services be disqualified and stripped away from children and their families. I spoke to you about this two months ago. I would like to know if you've been able to convince your cabinet colleagues to issue such a policy directive to ensure that this practice in those parts of the province where this occurred will be stopped and children will be put first.

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [children's issues]): I'm referring this question to the Minister of Health.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): As you know, CCACs, as has been pointed out earlier this afternoon, are local bodies. They are governed by individuals within local communities. Obviously, they are in a position to indicate what services are needed and also what members of a certain community are going to qualify for those particular services.

1420

Ms Lankin: This is the second time I have asked a question of my friend the minister responsible for children's issues and her cabinet colleagues have made her refer these questions.

I say to the Minister of Health, you and the minister responsible for seniors' issues have set up these CCACs across the province and you have not given any consideration to specialized children's services. It is not good enough to leave it to the local community, whose main focus has been seniors' services and whose secondary focus has been services for persons with disabilities. They do a fine job trying to manage those services. They are not experts in children's services.

You have cut out paediatric services, you have cut out children's treatment centres in some communities from bidding on these contracts. You can fix the problem. This

is not a local issue. It is a question of whether there is a provincial priority on children. You, Minister, can give that policy directive.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I think our government has made it abundantly clear that we are very concerned about children's issues, and it's for that reason that the Premier set up the ministry and the minister with responsibility for children's issues. There is collaboration among the education ministry, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Community and Social Services in order that we can address the needs of children throughout Ontario.

UNIFIED FAMILY COURT

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): My question is to the Attorney General. My question is about the Unified Family Court services. I understand that the services are under both federal and provincial law and provide families with access to mediation services as an alternative to the court system. Minister, could you please tell this Legislature what your ministry is doing to provide Unified Family Court services across the province.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): It's a very important question. The Ontario government is committed to the expansion of the Unified Family Court as fast as we possibly can. This court now operates in Hamilton, London, Barrie, Kingston and Napanee, and it has been termed a resounding success by the bench, the bar and the families who use it.

This court provides one-stop access for all family matters in one court, all matters being dealt with in a unified court. It's of great benefit to the public. It offers mediation services, education services, information services and truly allows the court to deal in the best interests of children because of the way the court is structured. Certainly we are looking for better ways of finding solutions and reducing the emotional toll of the court process, particularly on children.

This model is something we very much wish to expand across Ontario, and if the federal government permits us to, we will.

Mr Froese: The Niagara region has a population of almost half a million people and it needs a Unified Family Court. I believe St Catharines is the obvious choice. Can you tell this Legislature, Minister, if you have made any commitments with respect to expansion of the Unified Family Court as a means of improving the delivery of family law services in the Niagara region.

Hon Mr Harnick: I can certainly say that St Catharines would be a very strong candidate for the expansion of the Unified Family Court. As you know, recently the federal government announced it would appoint 17 judges to this court so it would permit us to expand the court. The number of judges falls far short of the expectations we have to be able to expand the court across Ontario so we don't have to run two separate systems for family law matters. As a result of the federal government only taking a half-step towards the expansion of the court — we're

grateful for that, although it wasn't enough, but we are grateful they are committed to some expansion of the court — we will be taking a look at all the communities that are ready to accommodate such a court, and certainly, as I said, St Catharines is a strong candidate.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. The arts and heritage community continues to see threatening signs from your government that point in the direction of less public support for culture in Ontario. In fact, your government has already ripped the heart out of the community by repeated and brutal cuts to the Ontario Arts Council, cuts to Ontario museums, art service organizations and our public libraries.

During the last session, Minister, you actually spoke about how your ministry was not in the business of giving out grants, which I know came as a shock to many of our partners. In fact, your government's style has been more one of death by a thousand cuts and this has been very upsetting as well. Can you tell us why your government has not seen the value of the arts in Ontario and has spent the last three years attacking it and all those who support it?

Hon Isabel Bassett (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): First of all, I thank the member opposite for the question because it gives me a chance to say how much this government values the arts. Every single ministry in the past three years has seen enormous cuts because we had, as you know, an \$11-billion deficit when we took office. Everyone has had to do their part. What we in this ministry have done is to make sure that we are assisting the artistic community to partnership with business and to get more sponsors to run their operations in a businesslike manner where possible, and we are beginning to see some of the results of that.

Mr Gravelle: Minister, there's no question there has been an extraordinary impact from the cuts you've made to the arts, culture and heritage community. Your cuts to the Ontario Arts Council have left this important supporter of the arts basically at 1974-75 funding levels, and we now hear that your government is moving to change the way the Ontario Arts Council provides grants and supports to culture.

We hear that your government will add another obstacle for arts organizations and individual artists by demanding increased private sector support in order to receive public support. Minister, are you so out of touch with the smaller community-based organizations in this province that you don't realize the impact of such a policy change?

Hon Ms Bassett: I know we've got to look at everything as carefully as we can, but we feel that making a buoyant economy is what helps the arts. I was at the theatre community just last night talking to some of my colleagues, and they say they've never seen such sales for

shows in the past three years because of the buoyant economy.

If I can refer to a comment from one of your colleagues, he said that the buoyant economy is beginning to reach the north, and, believe me, Thunder Bay is beginning to see as well some of the increased vitality in the economic community. That will impact on the arts. It will make sponsors more ready to sponsor shows.

For example, the Courtauld exhibit that's coming to Toronto is being sponsored. The Picasso exhibit in Ottawa is being sponsored by Midland Walwyn. More and more businesses are seeing the opportunities —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I'd like to return to my colleague the minister responsible for children's issues. Minister, if I didn't convince you of the need to intervene in this important issue when we spoke two months ago, then the Minister of Health's response today must be a deciding factor for you.

It is clear that the ministry has not any understanding of the importance of specialized children's health and home support services and that they are different than adults' — in particular seniors' — services in the skill and the expertise. We have agencies that have built up over long, hard years specialized expertise and we do not want to lose that. More important, we don't want to allow the children out there who need that to lose those services.

There are some community care access centres that don't understand that. Many in the province have done the right thing, but you could solve this problem. There are communities — I know you're aware of it because your colleagues have spoken to you — where they're fighting hard to solve the local problem. They've solved it temporarily for this year but not in the long haul. Minister, will you intervene and talk to cabinet and attempt to get a province-wide policy directive sent out?

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [children's issues]): This is not for me to answer. It is for the Minister of Health. I'm referring it back to the minister.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): To the member opposite: I can appreciate her concern and I can certainly appreciate the particular situation that she is referring to. I want to indicate to her that I agree that we need to make sure that when we go through this process of looking for services and looking for providers, we do it in such a way that we continue to provide continuity in the delivery of those services. So we're prepared to review the process that has been put in place to ensure that there is a continuity in the provision of the services.

1430

Ms Lankin: Three times now, and I'm very sorry, I say to my friend, your responsibility is to intervene on behalf of children and to talk with cabinet and to get cabinet to do the right thing.

I say to the Minister of Health that the quick briefing you got from the Minister of Community and Social Services about the problem in her own community doesn't quite go far enough because there are other communities involved in this.

The issue is one of right of choice, of parents of frail children to have continuity of service and to have the right expertise of service. But beyond that, the issue is one of community care access centres not being able, by pre-qualification, to prohibit specialized children's service providers from bidding on these contracts.

The only way to resolve this, Minister, is for you to issue a policy directive. I do appreciate that you will review step 1 of this. I am asking you now for a commitment that you will review the question of a province-wide policy directive to CCACs that they may not disqualify specialized children's services by pre-qualification requirements.

Hon Mrs Witmer: We are quite prepared to take your suggestions into consideration and we will do whatever we can in that regard.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Recently the government released draft legislation for the creation of a Greater Toronto Services Board. Yesterday I received a letter from the mayor of Markham in which he enclosed an outline of some proposals that were put together, suggested by the mayors of Vaughan, Mississauga, Burlington, Ajax, Aurora and, of course, Markham. They make some proposals that they contend would strengthen the Greater Toronto Services Board. Quite frankly, some of the proposals they've made I believe make some sense and I believe the government should seriously consider incorporating them into the legislation.

Minister, could you comment on your view of this input made by these mayors and can you assure us that in fact their recommendations will be given serious consideration?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the member for York-Mackenzie for his question. It was very nice to get the letter from the mayors and chairs of the greater Toronto area. It's better late than never. We had a consultation paper out a year and a half ago and would have appreciated getting the response at that time. However, they have put a lot of thought into the proposal that they put forward. The one thing that we all have in common is we recognize there is a need to coordinate the services right across the greater Toronto area, services like garbage disposal and economic development, transit and many others.

The mayors have made some recommendations on the draft legislation that's being presented around the greater Toronto area at the present time and I would be more than pleased to take their suggestions into consideration. One thing we want to do is make sure that the Greater Toronto Services Board works and it works well. If that requires

additional consultation, we'd be more than pleased to do that.

Mr Klees: Precisely to that issue, the undertaking of the Greater Toronto Services Board is a very important one. Decisions will be made, no doubt, through that board for many years to come that will impact the greater Toronto area. I know that the minister no doubt has a timetable in mind for the legislation.

Can we have an assurance in this House that the necessary time will be taken to get this right, and perhaps, if we need some additional time, that we will have that time for the appropriate consultations?

Hon Mr Leach: Again, I thank the member for York-Mackenzie for his question. As you're aware, we've retained Alan Tonks, the former chair of Metropolitan Toronto, to consult with all the stakeholders right across the GTA on their views as to how the Greater Toronto Services Board should work. We've received presentations and information from just about every stakeholder who is involved. We intend to take all of those comments into consideration and there will no doubt be some revisions to the draft legislation as a result of the input from all those stakeholders.

I can assure the member that if it takes additional consultation and additional time, this government is here to listen, we will listen and we will act on the information that's brought forward.

KIDNEY DIALYSIS

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): My question is to the Minister of Health. In 1996, over two years ago, your government promised to establish a dialysis treatment facility in Cornwall. Since then there has been delay after delay. Although the government's legal proceeding concerning the dialysis facility was completed over six months ago, we've not yet had notification on whether a licence has been issued.

A number of sites in Cornwall state that once a licence is issued, retrofitting can be done almost immediately so the provider can provide dialysis. Minister, your government's stalling has gone on far too long. The patients, families and health care representatives in the greater Cornwall area have waited too long. There is a real time frame and location on which I hope I will get the answer today. Therefore, will you confirm whether or not the Cornwall facility has been issued a licence?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): Yes, certainly, as the member well knows, dialysis services and the increasing number of dialysis services are a priority for our government. In fact, I am pleased to say that we have seen the expansion of 20 new dialysis centres throughout Ontario. We have spent \$25 million.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Thank you, Minister.

Hon Mrs Witmer: Indeed, we now have some pilot programs whereby in London and the London community

we are looking at providing dialysis within the homes of individuals.

However, there has been a unique situation in the Cornwall community. As you know, there was court action that was being pursued at one time, and although that has been abandoned, there are now discussions that are going on. As soon as we are in a position to make an official announcement I will be —

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr Cleary: Time and time again, I have requested on behalf of my constituents that you provide details on the negotiations for the Cornwall facility and an accurate time frame. But still there is a lot of confusion among the families. Mr and Mrs Ron McKee from Cornwall have expressed their frustration with your government's dithering on the matter and have extended an invitation to you to accompany them on a trip to Kingston, which they make three times a week to have treatment at the Kingston General Hospital renal facilities. It is the same with Mr and Mrs Fortin and dozens of others.

Mr and Mrs McKee write: "A dialysis treatment facility in Cornwall is critical, is long overdue, and is vital to the quality of life."

Minister, no more red tape, no more court. Political battles do not make a dream come true for the residents of Cornwall. Will you finally fulfil your government's commitment and present the specifics for when and where the Cornwall dialysis facility will be treating patients?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I can certainly appreciate the stories and the feelings of the people who have shared the stories with you. As I indicated to you, it has been and it continues to be a priority of our government to bring the dialysis services close to the homes of people and individuals across this province. However, we are still in discussions. As soon as I have information we will certainly let you know in order that your constituents can receive those services. I think you are aware of the fact that recently we have approved an additional 10 beds for the Kingston hospital. Although that's not in Cornwall, it does provide some additional services for your community.

1440

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I would like to introduce in the government members' gallery, sitting next to the honourable Allan Lawrence, Mr George Ashe, the ex-member for Durham West. Welcome.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question for the Minister of Education and Training. Is it correct that under the new four-year program curriculum for secondary schools, students will be required to have 30 credits in order to graduate?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): Yes, students will be required to have 30 credits: 18 mandatory, and the rest are not mandatory.

Mr Wildman: If that's the case, then how is it that the new funding formula only provides for 7.2 credits per year? Times four, that works out to 28.8. How does that work out to 30?

Hon David Johnson: In terms of the number of credits taken per year, there's quite a variance at the secondary school level today. In some boards, at some high schools, the figure is as low as about six, and in other boards it's as high as about 7.5.

The ministry is currently reviewing that very situation because of the variance. It was felt that, particularly this year where there are five years — of course, we still have grade 13 this year — the 7.2 credits at the secondary level is a little above average. Notwithstanding that, the ministry recognizes the variance, is reviewing the matter and has an eye on the fact that in the fall of next year there will be a four-year program at the secondary level.

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): My question is for the Minister of Labour. In the past 10 years, the Sarnia-Lambton area has experienced a very sluggish economy, mainly due to the fact that there has been a slowdown in the construction industry, in the petrochemical industry. The Sarnia area is not competitive with the Alberta area and certainly not competitive with the Gulf coast states.

Interjection: We wouldn't want to be.

Mr Beaubien: I think we would want to be, in Sarnia-Lambton; I'll tell you that much. Maybe you should be talking to some of my constituents.

Project management has been suggested as a possible way of dealing with the situation we are experiencing in the Sarnia-Lambton area. In the throne speech last week, there was mention of — I think the exact words were "construction competitiveness." Minister, is there a possibility that your ministry will address this particular situation in the next few weeks?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Labour, Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): I appreciate the question from the member for Lambton. The issue that is being addressed is the issue of project agreements. To attract large-scale project investments in the province of Ontario, there is a need for some flexibility.

I compliment the unions involved and the contractors and the petrochemical industry for making every effort since last fall to try to work out an agreement between themselves with respect to a framework for project agreements. Those efforts have been sincere. The Ministry of Labour has assisted in those efforts. Some further assistance is being offered this week to the parties to encourage them to arrive at a negotiated framework for project agreements in Ontario. I must say that the parties, including all of the trade union parties involved, have demonstrated goodwill in these discussions, these negotiations.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mr Flaherty: Project agreements will assist competitiveness in Ontario, particularly in attracting new investment in the petrochemical area, which will benefit the people of Sarnia and Lambton —

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr Beaubien: The unemployment rate in the Sarnia-Lambton area may be satisfactory to the members opposite in this House, but let me assure you that it is not satisfactory to this member; 12%, 13% unemployment is not satisfactory.

Minister, can I tell the constituents in my riding that within the next month or two we can expect some legislation dealing with this situation?

Hon Mr Flaherty: I thank the member for the question. It would be my hope that the parties themselves would arrive at a negotiated resolution, but if it's necessary to fill the gap and the parties are not able to arrive at a complete conclusion, then it is hoped that we would be able to move forward with project agreements.

We are losing work. We're losing skilled workers from Sarnia and Lambton to Alberta. We're losing projects to Texas. We're losing projects to Alberta. Our workers in the construction sector in Ontario want these jobs. They want these projects. Project agreements will result in more projects, more jobs for construction workers in Ontario, particularly in Lambton and Sarnia.

SENIORS' HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): My question is for the Minister of Health. Thousands of couples over the age of 65 are involuntarily separated because their spouses are residing in nursing homes. In most cases the spouse living in the nursing home has his or her income pay the care facility, and the resident then pays a \$2 user fee for prescription drugs. This often leaves the spouse who remains at home with an income of less than \$16,000 and as a result they have to pay the \$100 deductible and the higher \$6.11 user fee.

These seniors who live at home are involuntarily separated from their spouses by circumstance. As a result, they no longer have the same income as they did when they were cohabiting. However, they are being charged a significantly higher drug dispensing fee than the spouse who is living in a nursing facility.

We have been advised by the Ontario drug benefit plan that only legal separation or divorce is recognized and each is considered on their own. What could you —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. Minister of Health.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): If there is a specific issue you would like to bring to our attention, we would certainly be pleased to take a look at it. If there is an issue of financial hardship, certainly we would be prepared to follow up.

Mr Crozier: I have written to the previous Minister of Health about this issue and really didn't get a satisfactory answer.

The federal government considers a couple separated if they are in fact involuntarily separated. This places a hardship, as I have said, on a large segment of our population. Minister, will you do what the federal government does? Will you do the compassionate and correct thing and recognize —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr Crozier: Obviously when it comes to compassion for seniors, they don't want to listen to this.

Will you recognize involuntary separation the same as legal separation?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I hope this doesn't degenerate into a discussion as to who has more compassion. I think we need to remember that the action that is taking place regarding the copayment, the fee etc, is in accordance with the federal tax laws, and if there are to be some changes, obviously that's where some of those changes need to occur.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

M. Gilles Bisson (Cochrane-Sud) : Ma question est au procureur général. Comme vous le savez, vous avez présentement le projet de loi 108 que vous voulez réintroduire dans la Chambre pendant cette session. Vous voulez transférer les services juridiques, qui sont présentement des services provinciaux, aux municipalités de la province.

Vous avez refusé, en décembre passé, d'accepter notre amendement pour donner un garanti législatif aux francophones pour protéger les services en français tels qu'ils sont protégés sous la Loi 8.

On sait que depuis le mois de décembre, vous avez eu des rencontres avec l'association juridique de l'Ontario et autres. Avez-vous changé d'idée? Êtes-vous préparé à accepter un amendement qui protégerait les droits linguistiques des francophones dans la province de l'Ontario?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): We have, through Bill 108, developed a process to protect the French language far beyond the process the previous government used to protect the French language when they transferred parking tickets to municipal jurisdiction. In that case, there were no guarantees of French-language trials, no guarantees of French-language prosecutors and no guarantees of French-language service at the counter. We will guarantee all of those things with the transfer, and I can tell you that we are working to ensure that issues of due process will be protected in the legislation.

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BIRTH OF MEMBER'S GRANDSON

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, on a point of privilege: I know this is a very exciting day for many members of the Legislature with regard to the

budget, which is going to come down later this afternoon, and a very joyous event for all of us because of that. But an event which has happened this afternoon to my seat-mate the Hon Dianne Cunningham is that she has been blessed with a new grandchild, a baby boy. I'd like to congratulate her and I know every other member would like to do that too.

PETITIONS

INSTALLATIONS SCOLAIRES

Mr Gilles E. Morin (Carleton East): I have a petition signed by 441 of my constituents and it reads as follows:

«À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

«Attendu que le bâtiment vétuste de 43 ans occupé par l'école Nouveaux-Horizons depuis six ans devait être temporaire et avait été condamné en 1983 ;

«Attendu que ces installations déficientes ne fournissent pas un milieu propice à l'apprentissage ;

«Nous, les soussignés, pétitionnons l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario comme suit :

«De libérer des fonds pour permettre la construction d'une nouvelle école catholique française à Gloucester dans le secteur de Chapel Hill.»

J'ai affixé ma signature.

TUITION FEES

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas tuition fees have risen by more than 140% over the past 10 years; and

"Whereas the increases in the cost of living have stayed at 2% per year or less since 1986, while tuition has increased anywhere from 7% to 20% per year; and

"Whereas high tuition fees are a barrier to accessing post-secondary education, especially among students from low-income backgrounds, students with parental responsibilities and students with special needs; and

"Whereas students are now paying in excess of 40% of the operating costs of universities and colleges; and

"Whereas the quality of education, due in part to the erosion of facilities and the increasing of class sizes, has deteriorated;

"We, the undersigned, do hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to implement an immediate tuition freeze."

I've affixed my name to the petition.

ABORTION

Mr W. Leo Jordan (Lanark-Renfrew): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury, or illness, and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has the exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

That's signed by over 360 people and I affix my signature.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I thank the member for Lanark-Renfrew. I'm not certain, but isn't that your grandson behind you?

Mr Jordan: Yes, my grandson, a page in 1996.

The Speaker: Further petitions?

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): "Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

This petition is signed by a number of residents from Woodslee, Oldcastle and Cottam. I affix my name to it.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition signed by the members of the United Steelworkers, OPSEU, CUPE and CEP. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas each year in Ontario approximately 300 workers are killed on the job, several thousand die of occupational diseases and 400,000 suffer work-related injuries and illnesses; and

"Whereas during the past decade the Workers' Health and Safety Centre proved to be the most cost-effective WCB-funded prevention organization dedicated to worker health and safety concerns; and

"Whereas the WCB provides over 80% of its legislated prevention funding to several employer-controlled safety

associations and less than 20% to the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre recently lost several million dollars in funding and course revenues due to government changes to legislated training requirements; and

"Whereas 30% of Workers' Health and Safety Centre staff were laid off due to these lost training funds; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre now faces an additional 25% cut to its 1998 budget, which will be used to augment new funding for employer safety associations in the health, education and service sectors; and

"Whereas the WCB's 1998 planned baseline budget cuts for safety associations and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre will be disproportionately against the workers' centre and reduce its 1998 budget allocation to less than 15% of the WCB prevention funding,

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the WCB's proposed cuts and direct the WCB to increase the Workers' Health and Safety Centre's funding to at least 50% of the WCB's legislated prevention funding;

"Further we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the WCB to significantly increase its legislated prevention funding in order to eliminate workplace illness, injury and death."

I proudly add my name to those of these workers.

ABORTION

Mr Dave Boushy (Sarnia): I have a petition signed from my riding which reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness, and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has the exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

I will be glad to add my signature to it.

CHIROPRACTIC HEALTH CARE

Mr Peter North (Elgin): A petition to the Ontario Legislature:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health has recently strengthened its reputation as the Ministry of Medicine through its \$1.7-billion three-year agreement with the Ontario Medical Association; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is restricting access to alternative cost-saving treatments for patients of the province; and

"Whereas two recent reports commissioned by the Ministry of Health called for increased OHIP funding to improve patient access to chiropractic services on the grounds of safety, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness; and

"Whereas over one million Ontario adults now use chiropractic services annually, increasingly those with higher incomes, because of the cost barrier caused by government underfunding; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has shown blatant disregard for the needs of the citizens of Ontario in restricting funding for chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize the contribution made by chiropractors to the good health of the people of Ontario, to recognize the taxpayer dollars saved by the use of low-cost preventive care such as that provided by chiropractors and to recognize that to restrict funding for chiropractic health care only serves to limit access to a needed health care service."

I affix my signature.

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EDUCATION REFORM

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the government of Ontario is determined to pass Bill 160 without meaningful consultation with parents, teachers and other stakeholders; and

"Whereas a properly funded quality education system is critical to the wellbeing of the children of this province and to the future of the province itself;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"That the Legislative Assembly hold a province-wide referendum on the question of whether Bill 160, the Education Quality Improvement Act, 1997, should be withdrawn or, if enacted, whether Bill 160 should be repealed."

I've also signed the petition.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas each year in Ontario approximately 300 workers are killed on the job, several thousand die of occupational diseases and 400,000 suffer work-related injuries and illnesses; and

"Whereas during the past decade the Workers' Health and Safety Centre proved to be the most cost-effective WCB-funded prevention organization dedicated to worker health and safety concerns; and

"Whereas the WCB provides over 80% of its legislated prevention funding to several employer-controlled safety associations and less than 20% to the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre recently lost several million dollars in funding and course revenue due to government changes to legislated training requirements; and

"Whereas 30% of Workers' Health and Safety Centre staff were laid off due to these lost training funds; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre now faces an additional 25% cut to its 1998 budget, which will be used to augment new funding for employer safety associations in the health, education and services sector;" — they already have 80% — "and

"Whereas the WCB's 1998 plan to baseline budget cuts for safety associations and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre will be disproportionately against the workers' centre and reduce its 1998 budget allocation to less than 15% of the WCB prevention funding,

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the WCB's proposed cuts and direct the WCB to increase the Workers' Health and Safety Centre's funding to at least 50% of the WCB's legislated prevention funding; and

"Further we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the WCB to significantly increase its legislated prevention funding in order to eliminate workplace illness, injury and death."

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I have a petition which reads as follows:

"Whereas nurses in Ontario often experience coercion to participate in practices which directly contravene their deeply held ethical standards;

"Whereas pharmacists in Ontario are often pressured to dispense or sell chemicals and/or devices contrary to their moral or religious beliefs;

"Whereas public health workers in Ontario are expected to assist in providing controversial services and promoting controversial materials against their consciences;

"Whereas physicians in Ontario often experience pressure to give referrals for medications, treatments and/or procedures which they believe to be gravely immoral;

"Whereas competent health care workers and students in various health care disciplines in Ontario have been denied training, employment, continued employment and advancement in their intended fields and suffered other forms of unjust discrimination because of the dictates of their consciences; and

"Whereas the health care workers experiencing such unjust discrimination have at present no practical and accessible legal means to protect themselves;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers, prohibiting coercion of and unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary to the dictates of their consciences and establishing penalties for such coercion and unjust discrimination."

LINHAVEN HOME FOR THE AGED

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas Linhaven Home for the Aged has provided excellent service to seniors in St Catharines for many years;

"Whereas the staff and volunteers at Linhaven have endeavoured to enhance the quality of life of residents of the home through their kind and compassionate care;

"Whereas cuts in funding to Linhaven will result in a reduction of staff and resources available to meet the needs of seniors who reside in the home;

"Whereas the discharging of acute care patients from active treatment hospitals results in medical staff at homes for the aged being required to provide more extensive and intensive care to patients who are discharged from hospitals;

"Whereas Linhaven and other homes for the aged have among the residents more individuals afflicted with Alzheimer disease, Parkinson's disease and other medical conditions which require an appropriate complement of staff and necessary equipment to meet their medical needs;

"Be it resolved that the government of Ontario increase funding to Linhaven Home for Aged in St Catharines so that the medical requirements of Linhaven residents may be properly addressed and seniors may live in dignity in our community."

I affix my signature to this petition as I'm in full agreement with its contents.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent of the House that we now suspend the proceedings until 4 o'clock, at which time the budget will be presented.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The government House leader seeks consent. Also, I'll cause the bells to ring at five to 4 to call the members back. Agreed? Agreed.

This House is in recess until 4 o'clock.

The House recessed from 1507 to 1600.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

1998 ONTARIO BUDGET

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by Mr Harris, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I ask the indulgence of the House as the pages deliver the budget. Have all members got copies?

Hon Mr Eves: All across Ontario today, small business owners, entrepreneurs and private sector investors are creating jobs. Jobs for welders and store clerks; for child care workers and truck drivers; for factory workers and software designers; for scientists, technicians and machinists. Companies large and small are investing and expanding.

Today, taxes are lower; the deficit is being reduced; welfare recipients are returning to work; taxpayers' money is being spent more wisely; and major investments are being made in health care and in our children's classrooms.

In the first quarter of 1998, Ontario experienced a rate of job growth unprecedented in the past 15 years, and I am proud to say that between February 1997 and February of this year, more jobs were created in Ontario than have ever been created in a one-year period in the entire history of our province.

Today, Ontarians have a renewed confidence, a renewed optimism in the future. Today, Ontarians believe, as do we, that our province is once again the best place in the world in which to live, work and invest.

In my budget last year I spoke of laying the foundation so that young people like my daughter Natalie and her generation could reach their full potential in a greater and stronger Ontario.

This budget builds on those foundations through more tax cuts, additional improvements in health care, support for children, initiatives for safer communities, and investments in learning.

I want to extend my personal thanks to my good friend and colleague Premier Mike Harris and to all my colleagues in the House for their guidance and counsel.

I would also like to thank the entire team at the Ministry of Finance; my personal staff, led by Steve Pengelly; and finance staff inspired by Deputy Minister Michael Gourley.

I don't think it would be possible to find a more dedicated, innovative team leader than Mike Gourley. We are indeed a team at the Ministry of Finance.

Mike and I, Sunday, took our traditional walkaround through the print shop and other areas of the Ministry of Finance. There are many dedicated people working there, endless hours — night, afternoon and morning. This morning as I entered the Frost building, two dedicated employees were wheeling over the final copies of the budget. They said, "Hey, Ernie, we've just wrapped it all up." It's that kind of camaraderie that makes one's job a little easier. Mike Gourley's assistance and support have helped me immeasurably over the past three years. I guess you could even say that this budget has been Gourleyized.

I want to thank my family: my mother, who while encouraging all of her children to get an education to prepare themselves for future opportunities never let us forget the needs of the less fortunate in society. To my wife Vicki and daughter Natalie, a heartfelt thank you for

their support and love through some very difficult times in the past few years.

Thank you to the many individuals and organizations across the province who shared with me their thoughts, their ideas and their experiences.

All Ontarians can be proud of the accomplishments of the last three years.

Ontario's economy is booming.

The province's economy expanded by some 4.8% in 1997 and the average private sector forecast for growth this year is 4%.

Private sector forecasters expect Ontario's economy will grow faster than any of the G-7 industrialized nations over the next three years.

Consumer confidence rose for the ninth straight quarter early in 1998, and so far this year retail sales have risen by 10%.

Housing starts increased by almost 26% last year and our land transfer tax refund has helped more than 28,000 families buy their first new home. The value of business building permits issued last year rose by almost 33%.

Ontario's international exports are up by 8.3% so far this year. The Export Marketing Task Force is working to increase Ontario's share of the global export market.

Women entrepreneurs are playing an ever-increasing role in the expanding Ontario economy. The Joseph L. Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto is developing new business leaders with its highly successful management program. In partnership with the private sector, it is recognizing outstanding successful women entrepreneurs through its Woman Entrepreneur of the Year Award.

My colleague the Honourable Dianne Cunningham, minister responsible for women's issues, will be holding roundtable discussions on ways to expand this type of very innovative program.

The 1997-98 Ontario deficit will be \$5.2 billion. This represents a reduction of almost \$1.4 billion from the \$6.6-billion target set out in the 1997 budget. It also includes an additional \$725 million for the cost of an agreement with the teachers providing for early retirement opportunity and other benefit enhancements.

The deficit for this fiscal year will be \$4.2 billion, some \$600 million lower than the deficit target set last year in the balanced budget plan and including, as usual, a \$650-million contingency reserve fund.

The balanced budget plan will ensure that the deficit is eliminated by the year 2000-01.

The Ontario economy created 265,000 net new private sector jobs between February 1997 and February of this year. This is the largest number of jobs created in a 12-month period in the entire history of the province. In the first quarter of this year, the Ontario economy created jobs at a rate unequalled in the past 15 years.

Ontario's unemployment rate declined again in March to 7.4%.

Overall, 1998 promises to be one of the best years in Ontario's history for job creation.

A tax cut is the best job creation program.

I have already announced 30 tax cuts in the previous two budgets. Today I am proposing 36 more tax reductions.

We promised the people of Ontario a 30% provincial income tax cut over three years. As a result of the first four steps of the Ontario tax cut, the economy has performed better than expected. Therefore, I am introducing legislation to accelerate the final phase of the tax cut to July 1, 1998 — half a year ahead of schedule.

A promise made, a promise kept.

Every Ontario taxpayer gets a tax cut.

When this final stage is implemented, more than 90% of Ontario taxpayers will see a cut in Ontario income tax of at least 30%.

Most of this tax reduction goes to the nearly three million middle-income earners in this province. These taxpayers, who earn between \$25,000 and \$75,000 a year, will receive 64%, or almost \$3 billion, of savings from the tax cut each and every year.

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Ontarians with modest incomes will get the largest percentage of the reductions.

Ontario leads the way in cutting taxes. In 1998, the broad-based Ontario income tax cut will provide five times more in tax reductions than the selective cuts made by the federal government. The Ontario tax cut means more tax relief for more people.

As a result of Ontario's tax cut, a couple with two children and a net family income of \$60,000 will pay \$1,210 less in Ontario income tax this year alone. When this year's cut is combined with reductions in the last two years, that family will have saved \$2,165. When you add the \$1,385 in 1999 savings, the total benefit to that family from Ontario's tax cut will be \$3,550.

This same family can look forward to a \$120 tax savings in the narrowly based federal tax cut.

Ontario and other provinces have taken action by introducing substantial income tax cuts. In recent discussions, several leading economists have told us that the federal government's refusal to meaningfully cut taxes is holding back economic growth in Canada.

Meaningful and lasting jobs are created by the private sector. Governments can help by establishing an environment that supports job creation, by cutting taxes, reducing the deficit and eliminating red tape. The government of Ontario is doing just that.

We are committed to taking further action to foster job creation.

Last year, small businesses created an estimated 82% of all new private sector jobs in Ontario.

Ontario promised to support job creation by reducing the payroll tax burden on small business.

In the 1996 budget, the government announced that the employer health tax would be eliminated from the first \$400,000 of payroll, effective January 1, 1999. A full 88%, or some 270,000 Ontario private sector employers, would no longer pay one cent of this job-killing payroll tax.

I am proposing to accelerate the final phase of this exemption. To give effect to the \$400,000 exemption as of July 1 this year, I will introduce legislation to increase the payroll tax exemption from \$300,000 of payroll to \$350,000 of payroll for the entire 1998 taxation year, delivering the full exemption six months ahead of schedule.

A promise made, a promise kept.

Many individual small business owners have told us that further cuts to small business taxes would help them to create even more jobs.

Today, I am pleased to announce that the government will introduce legislation to cut the small business corporations tax rate in half, from 9.5%, the highest rate in Canada, to 4.75%, the lowest rate in Canada, over the next eight years. Under this legislation, the tax rate on eligible small business income will be reduced from 9.5% to 9%, effective midnight tonight, and would be reduced each year thereafter until 2006, when it would be one half the current rate. This tax cut will help more than 90,000 small businesses continue to grow and create jobs in the province.

We have been told by small business that certainty boosts business confidence and encourages job creation. To ensure that small businesses can be certain of receiving the full benefit of this cut, proposed legislation will confirm the entire eight-year reduction.

Three months ago, I offered to match dollar-for-dollar cuts in above-average business property taxes. I am pleased to announce that the province will do its part.

We will introduce legislation to ensure an eight-year plan to reduce commercial and industrial education taxes in some 366 municipalities where these rates are above the provincial average. Provincial business education taxes will be cut by more than \$500 million from current levels, starting with a \$64-million cut this calendar year. The cut will be \$128 million in 1999 and the balance will be phased in over the remainder of the eight-year program.

A promise made, a promise kept.

Lower property taxes will increase the competitiveness of Ontario businesses and help them to create more jobs.

Local governments also need to cut taxes to create jobs and stimulate economic growth in their communities. Only a few of Ontario's 650-some municipalities have announced decisions on 1998 property taxes to date.

Some communities, such as Milton, Nepean and the township of Haldimand, are leading the way and have announced plans to cut municipal property taxes. Some municipalities have announced plans for a tax freeze and a balanced budget, including the cities of Toronto, Niagara Falls, Kingston and Owen Sound, and the towns of Fort Frances and Kenora.

Other municipalities have demonstrated a solid record on holding the line on taxes for several years, including the cities of Brantford, Stratford and Cornwall, and the towns of Prescott, Blind River and Parry Sound.

The city of Mississauga, under the dynamic leadership of Mayor Hazel McCallion, has a most enviable record in this regard.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Come to order. Members for Lake Nipigon and Scarborough North, come to order.

Hon Mr Eves: After municipal budgets have been set for 1998, the government will begin a new dialogue with municipalities and taxpayers to find the most effective ways to further reduce property taxes, while maintaining important services.

In the 1997 budget I announced the creation of the Ontario Research and Development Challenge Fund. This \$500-million fund supports leading-edge R&D through partnerships between Ontario's research institutions and the private sector.

Today, I would like to announce four investments approved in the challenge fund's first competition.

Laurentian University in Sudbury will establish a new research and development program for sustainable mining that will develop innovative mining technology.

The Samuel Lunenfeld Research Institute at Mount Sinai Hospital, a world leader in medical research, will set up a program in biomedical research for the 21st century.

The University of Waterloo and the University of Toronto will each establish complementary research laboratories to develop computer technologies for telecommunications services.

Every one of these initiatives has attracted substantial private sector funding. I would like to thank Dr Cal Stiller, chair of the Ontario R&D Challenge Fund board, for his fine leadership in making the R&D challenge fund a high-impact program.

These are only a few of the many excellent proposals to be approved that the challenge fund is supporting. My colleague the Honourable Jim Wilson, Minister of Energy, Science and Technology, will announce other investments in the coming weeks.

The province will accelerate \$135 million of the R&D challenge fund commitment over the next three years to match the Canada Foundation for Innovation's initial awards to Ontario research institutions. I would like to thank Dr Peter George, president of McMaster University, and Dr William Leggett, principal of Queen's University, for making this suggestion on behalf of all Ontario universities.

The government will extend the telecommunications access partnerships (TAP) program by investing \$30 million over the next three years to further encourage innovative ways to make use of the information highway. The TAP program is opening new paths for sharing information in the health care and education fields.

I am also introducing initiatives to support the interactive digital media, sound recording, computer animation and special effects industries, which have the potential for rapid expansion and job creation.

A vibrant economy depends on high-quality, high-capacity transportation networks. We are investing more than \$820 million in this fiscal year to upgrade Ontario's highways, including our northern highway network. The Minister of Transportation, the Honourable Tony Clement,

and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, the Honourable Chris Hodgson, will announce further details.

The resurgence of the Ontario agriculture and food sector — led by new investments, innovations and value added food products and record levels of exports — continues to be a key component in the growth of the provincial economy.

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The government's plan is working to ensure that more good things grow in Ontario, that jobs grow in Ontario.

More than 200,000 people have jobs in tourism, one of Ontario's most important industries.

Attractions and destinations such as Niagara Falls, Point Pelee, Toronto's CN Tower, Georgian Bay's 30,000 islands, the Agawa Canyon, Science North, Lake of the Woods, Ottawa's Rideau Canal and Upper Canada Village are just some of the reasons why 33 million visitors are drawn to Ontario annually. Additional tourism marketing will attract more visitors and create more tourism jobs.

Ontario was once a leader in tourism promotion. We have listened to Ontario tourism operators' call to better promote Ontario. We are responding by investing \$120 million to market Ontario better over the next four years.

Increased tourism will also be encouraged by a new self-sustaining cultural attractions trust fund that will support the tourism potential of major events at cultural centres such as the McMichael Art Gallery, the Royal Botanical Gardens, the Art Gallery of Ontario and the Royal Ontario Museum.

A new \$25-million arts endowment fund will match and invest money for participating arts organizations that contribute to Ontario's vibrant culture and diverse economy. I would like to thank the former Lieutenant Governor of Ontario and current chair of the Ontario Arts Council, the Honourable Hal Jackman, for this recommendation.

A clean environment keeps Ontario competitive and makes the province an attractive place to live and work.

Ontario will provide \$20 million in funding for the natural areas protection initiative to protect important natural heritage sites and environmentally sensitive lands. The funding will assist in acquiring lands to develop a system of parks and protected areas in the Niagara Escarpment, the Rouge Valley and the Lynde Marsh.

Ten million dollars in funding for fish and wildlife protection enhancement will help improve provincial fish and wildlife management.

I am also announcing the creation of the Ontario Great Lakes Renewal Foundation, with an initial endowment of \$5 million to attract contributions for cleanup efforts around the Great Lakes.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Algoma, come to order, please. Hamilton East as well, come to order.

Hon Mr Eves: Society benefits when all of its members are given an opportunity to contribute in a meaningful way in the workplace.

This government is committed to supporting people with disabilities through a variety of measures, including the creation of an Ontarians with Disabilities Act. We will promote opportunities for people with disabilities by increasing access to employment, transportation, education and training. People with disabilities can, want to and do contribute to a thriving economy.

The government has already taken people with disabilities off welfare through the Ontario disability support program.

Today, we propose to provide a new, accelerated tax incentive that would support the efforts of businesses to accommodate people with disabilities. This measure would assist thousands of businesses each year in providing increased access and job opportunities for people with disabilities.

In the coming weeks, my colleague the Honourable Isabel Bassett, Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, will provide details of this program and other initiatives to increase such access and job opportunities.

As well, we propose that the retail sales tax rebate for personal use vehicles purchased to transport people with physical disabilities be expanded to include additional family members and non-family care providers.

Ontario youth are benefiting from the province's strong economic growth. However, too many young people are still unemployed.

The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Honourable Noble Villeneuve, will announce details of a four-year, \$35-million rural youth jobs strategy shortly.

The Premier recently announced the 1998 summer jobs strategy, a \$51-million program that would help 48,500 young people find jobs this summer, twice as many as were helped in 1995.

The number of students attending colleges and universities in Ontario increased in the last decade, even though the population of 18- to 29-year-olds declined.

The Minister of Education and Training, the Honourable Dave Johnson, will announce how an additional \$29 million in annual grants, phased in over three years, will recognize the contribution of Ontario universities that have increased students' access to post-secondary education and enhanced their job opportunities.

We are excited about the federal government's new millennium scholarship fund, which will provide an estimated \$1.2 billion in scholarships to Ontario's college and university students over 10 years, beginning in the year 2000.

We have a plan to create a new student assistance program which will be designed to meet the needs of Ontario students and to limit student debt. We will combine Ontario's share of the millennium fund with both federal and Ontario spending on student loans to create a new Canada-Ontario millennium fund for students that will invest more than \$9 billion in student assistance over 10 years.

In the coming months, the Minister of Education and Training will propose details of this new program. This

program will address all elements of student assistance, including harmonizing the patchwork of federal-provincial programs and simplifying administration. It will allow us to take major steps forward in supporting college and university students and maintaining their access to an affordable education.

A promise made, a promise kept.

Access is not just about financial resources. More must be done to help students with learning disabilities attend college and university.

The Learning Opportunities Task Force for the integration and support of learning-disabled students in post-secondary education, which I asked Dr Bette Stephenson to lead in last year's budget, has completed its initial work and will be reporting on selected pilot projects over the next few weeks.

Nine pilot projects have been selected, involving nine colleges of applied arts and technology and four universities.

Among those institutions that have been selected are York University, the University of Guelph, Cambrian College and an innovative partnership among the three French-language colleges: la Cité collégiale, le Collège Boréal and le Collège des Grands Lacs.

The others are Fanshawe College, Conestoga College, Georgian College and an innovative joint program involving Nipissing University, Canadore College, Trent University and Loyalist College.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Eves: I say to the member for Renfrew North, Joe Clark is welcome to it.

The needs of both French-language and aboriginal students are addressed by all of these proposals.

The selected pilot projects will provide post-secondary programs needed by more than 400 learning-disabled students this year alone.

A promise made, a promise kept.

Colleges have benefited from a one-year extension of the Ontario student opportunities trust fund. They have raised an additional \$30 million, which will be matched by the province. The more than \$600 million in total in the fund will help 185,000 college and university students over the next decade get a post-secondary education they couldn't have otherwise afforded.

A promise made, a promise kept.

1630

The government, in partnership with the private sector, will reward excellence in graduate studies in science and technology through new graduate scholarships. Seventy-five million dollars will be awarded to students over the next 10 years through this initiative.

In addition, the government, in partnership with the private sector, will provide another \$75 million over 10 years for new research excellence awards to help our world-class researchers attract talented people to their research teams. The Minister of Education and Training and the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology will provide more detailed information about these awards.

In the last 10 years, two out of every three jobs in Ontario have been created in knowledge- and technology-based industries.

Demand by Ontario businesses for skilled employees consistently exceeds the supply of graduates from our colleges and universities. The Canadian Advanced Technology Association has told us that there will be a shortage of some 42,000 computer scientists and electrical and computer engineers over the next five years alone. They said we must "double the pipeline" of graduates in these programs to remain competitive.

Today, I am announcing a special Access to Opportunities program to enable twice as many students to enrol in computer science and high-demand engineering programs. The government will invest \$150 million over the next three years to implement this program, which will provide up to 17,000 new opportunities for students each year. The government will apply a "market test" by requiring industry to match start-up costs.

In the 1997 budget, I announced a government-industry partnership to create a world-class Animation, Communications Design and Technology Centre at Sheridan College. Today, I am committing more than \$10 million to another four projects that will enhance strategic skills.

We will support a new partnership between Georgian College and the Industrial Research and Development Institute, made up of some 250 member firms that employ more than 150,000 people in the province of Ontario. The partnership will provide advanced training in automotive parts design and manufacturing technology.

I would like to thank Norman Jewison for his efforts to enhance new media skills training, and announce that we will support this work at the Canadian Film Centre.

We will support comprehensive skills training for the telecommunications industry through the Telecommunications Learning Institute at Humber College.

Our support of metal machining, engineering and information technology training at Conestoga College will help to provide the skilled workers required by many southwestern Ontario firms.

The province has set aside an additional \$20 million this year to seek and support more of these effective partnerships to develop critical skills now. The Minister of Energy, Science and Technology will lead consultations with industry, educational institutions and training providers, and begin making approvals in June of this year.

In addition to these new initiatives, we have a comprehensive plan to strengthen training in the workplace to get thousands of unemployed Ontarians back to work. We will use the employment insurance dollars that Ontario's employers and employees have contributed and that they deserve.

Over the next 10 years, our made-in-Ontario workplace training and employment plan will direct some \$9.5 billion to Ontario's priorities. It will provide opportunities for more than 750,000 Ontarians per year.

Our plan will give apprenticeship the status and recognition it deserves. We need to dramatically change

and redesign Ontario's apprenticeship program to make it more relevant to the workplace.

We will work with employers to provide work placements, internships and on-the-job training to meet critical skill shortages. We will work with municipalities to ensure that welfare recipients have a chance to get marketable skills and meaningful work experience. We will provide young people with jobs and training.

It is imperative that the federal and provincial governments work together to put taxpayers' dollars to best use by providing every person with an opportunity for a lasting and meaningful job.

The government's reforms to welfare are producing impressive results. Since June 1995, the welfare caseload has gone down by almost 20%.

More than a quarter of a million people are no longer dependent on welfare. That is equivalent to the combined population of cities the size of Ajax, Belleville, North Bay, Owen Sound and Sarnia put together.

Ontario Works is all about helping people on welfare get jobs. Already, more than 240,000 people have benefited by acquiring skills, confidence and contacts.

A promise made, a promise kept.

The government will take further steps to ensure that welfare recipients continue to find routes to jobs and independence.

The Learning, Earning and Parenting program will provide \$25 million in child care subsidies and other supports to help single parents on welfare finish school.

A promise made, a promise kept.

An additional \$10 million will be made available for child care assistance for other participants in Ontario Works to provide greater flexibility and choices for parents.

The Honourable Janet Ecker, Minister of Community and Social Services, will have more to say about these important initiatives.

For the third year in a row, the government proposes to give extra tax cuts to modest-income taxpayers through the Ontario tax reduction program.

The Ontario tax reduction adjustments made by this government will benefit an additional 360,000 taxpayers. Seventy thousand Ontarians will have their Ontario income tax entirely eliminated. A further 290,000 taxpayers will have their income tax reduced by more than 30%.

We also recognize the importance of providing assistance to working families.

In the 1997 budget, we announced a \$40-million child care tax credit. Ontario intends to combine that money with an additional \$100 million in this fiscal year to create a new program that will support 350,000 young children in working families. Under this program, modest- and middle-income working families would receive a new Ontario child care supplement for working families of up to \$1,020 for each child under the age of seven years. Next year, we plan to invest more than \$200 million in this program.

The government proposes to provide businesses with a new 30% workplace child care tax deduction for the capital cost of building or expanding onsite child care facilities, or for contributions to facilities in the community that care for the children of working parents.

The child care initiatives introduced by this government would triple the number of children who benefit from child care assistance to an estimated 450,000 children.

A promise made, a promise kept.

We all want to be sure that the excellent health care services we rely on will be there when we, our family members or our friends require help.

Despite the fact that the federal government has reduced funding to the program that supports health care by over \$2.4 billion over the last three years, this year the province of Ontario will spend \$18.5 billion on health care, up \$300 million from the 1998-99 operational spending announced in the December 1997 Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review.

Despite the fact that the federal government now spends only \$125 on health care for each person in Ontario, this year the Ontario government will spend \$1,639 to meet the health needs of each Ontarian.

Despite the fact that the federal government collects twice as much personal income tax revenue from each taxpayer in this province than the provincial government collects, it provides less than eight cents of every dollar spent on health care, while the province of Ontario pays the rest.

While the federal government has all but abandoned the health care needs of the people of Ontario, our government is improving the services people have now and expanding those that they will need in the future.

Not only is this year's projected health care spending of \$18.5 billion an increase of more than \$1 billion from 1995-96, it is more than any Ontario government has ever spent on health care.

A promise made, a promise kept.

1640

My colleague the Honourable Elizabeth Witmer, Minister of Health, announced that community-based health services will be expanded over the next eight years to better care for an aging population. The province is adding 20,000 and upgrading another 13,500 senior care beds. The province is investing \$1.2 billion to increase beds for seniors by 35% and expand health care services for seniors, people with continuing care needs and children with disabilities.

The Minister of Health responded quickly to the recommendations of the Hospital Emergency Room Task Force by announcing \$75 million over the next two years to support opening hospital beds in times of peak demand. The government will also increase training for critical care and emergency room nurses.

In addition, \$55 million will be spent over two years to create 1,700 senior care beds in available space in hospitals.

All of these changes mean improved health services. They also mean jobs. The increase in senior care beds will

lead to the creation of 27,500 nursing, personal care and other health care jobs as well as 42,500 construction jobs. Our emergency room investments will provide jobs for 1,000 nurses. With a \$1-million investment, nurses will receive the most up-to-date training in critical and emergency care.

I am also announcing a \$5-million fund to enhance community-based nursing care in community health centres and other agencies.

To ensure a more coordinated approach to the future of the nursing profession, the government will establish a Nursing Services Task Force.

The government will provide \$300 million for medical equipment renewal to ensure that the health care sector has the capacity to maintain the excellence of its medical equipment. This will assist the health sector in addressing year 2000 issues.

The government is committed to improving the health and safety of children in Ontario.

Ontario will increase funding for the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program by \$10 million this year, growing to a \$50-million annual program by the year 2000.

Prior to this budget, I held 20 round table discussions with more than 200 groups representing a broad cross-section of Ontario society. I have spoken personally with hundreds of individuals who have shared their ideas with me.

The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies told me that more needs to be done to help our most vulnerable children. We listened and we are responding by providing children's aid societies with an additional \$170 million over the next three years. These resources will be directed at increasing the number of child protection staff, providing better training for front-line workers and revitalizing foster care.

A promise made, a promise kept.

Ontarians understand that the most effective education dollars are those spent in the classroom.

In March, the Minister of Education and Training announced a fair funding formula for education. The government has defined classroom spending and has focused elementary and secondary education dollars there, while adding \$583 million in new spending in the classroom.

A promise made, a promise kept.

Students achieve better results when they are in smaller classes and can receive more individual attention from their teachers. That is why Ontario introduced the class size protection fund. This \$1.2-billion fund will end the trend towards larger classes and ensure that the average class size, on a board-wide basis, is no larger than 25 students in elementary school and 22 students in secondary school.

For students with special needs, we are providing \$1 billion each year in a separate envelope to ensure that this funding indeed goes to special education.

The Minister of Education and Training has committed to stable spending for elementary and secondary education over the next three years.

Today, I am pleased to announce that over the next two years, the government, together with private sector partners, will invest \$130 million to strengthen the Internet networking of our education system and promote lifelong learning.

The government will provide \$100 million for the purchase of textbooks and other learning materials so that all elementary students will have access to the very latest information and knowledge. This will double the amount of money available for books in the next school year. Funding of \$150 will be provided for each and every elementary student.

In addition, the Minister of Education and Training will announce more than \$12 million in funding this year for initiatives to update laboratories and buy equipment, double the grants to school boards for math and science tutors, and expand standardized testing.

One of the most innovative ideas I heard in round table discussions came from Rich Richardson, a volunteer with the High Road Foundation. In response to Mr Richardson's request, the foundation will be given funding for a pilot project to look at ways to help our young people stay in school.

To complement the introduction of the new fair funding model for education, the government will provide one-time adjustment funding of \$69 million to assist school boards in a smooth implementation of the funding model.

The government and the Ontario Teachers' Federation, representing 155,000 teachers, 90,000 deferred pensioners and 57,000 pensioners, surviving spouses and their families, have reached an agreement on changes to the teachers' pension plan.

This agreement is good for education, good for students, good for teachers and good for taxpayers.

It will allow more than 18,000 teachers to retire early and will open up many thousands of teaching opportunities for highly qualified graduates of Ontario's teachers' colleges.

Taxpayers will no longer have to make \$33 billion in unnecessary special payments to the teachers' pension plan over the next 31 years.

Everyone has a right to a sense of personal safety and to feel assured that their family is safe. The government will spend more than \$150 million over five years on new community safety initiatives.

The community policing partnership with municipalities will result in the hiring of hundreds of new front-line police officers to serve our communities.

Other initiatives include a new OPP cadet training program, a rural crime prevention strategy, the establishment of a multforce "Anti-Biker Gang Squad," and a proposal to more than double fines for running red lights.

We will ensure that the appropriate judicial infrastructure is also in place to support these initiatives.

All of these initiatives have benefited from the efforts of my friend and colleague Bob Runciman, the member

for Leeds-Grenville, who will always be honourable to me.

Today's budget does indeed build on the foundations we have laid for a greater and stronger Ontario.

The 36 tax cuts I am proposing in this budget will bring to 66 the number of times we have cut taxes in less than three years. Tax cuts that are creating jobs and economic growth.

But tax cuts don't just create opportunities — they ensure a quality of life that allows all Ontarians to take advantage of these opportunities, today and in the future.

1650

As President John F. Kennedy said in 1962 —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, member for Ottawa West. Member for Scarborough North, come to order, please. Minister.

Hon Mr Eves: — "Wealth is the means and people are the ends. All our material riches will avail us little if we do not use them to expand the opportunities of our people."

In Ontario, tax cuts are helping welfare recipients find hope. They are contributing to child care initiatives that will support almost half a million children and their families.

They are assisting hundreds of thousands of post-secondary students get the education they deserve. They are aiding our government as we remove the barriers that keep people with disabilities and other Ontarians from sharing fully in our thriving economy.

Tax cuts are contributing to significant new investments in the classroom — in textbooks province-wide. They are allowing for record investments in health care to ensure that our families have the services they require, and that our seniors have the care and dignity they deserve.

In the words of Premier Harris, "Our goals have always been straightforward —"

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Hamilton Centre, member for St Catharines as well, come to order. Minister.

Hon Mr Eves: "Our goals have always been straightforward: to build a climate where jobs and prosperity are available equally and to all people; to maintain the quality of life that we enjoy in Ontario; and to ensure a healthy and secure future for our children, a future full of hope and opportunity."

As today's budget confirms, Ontario is poised to enter the 21st century with a confidence that many thought

impossible just three years ago — with jobs and growth, with prosperity today and optimism for a better tomorrow, with promises made and promises kept.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I am pleased to move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: Mr Bradley moves adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Government House leader.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I believe we have unanimous consent to revert to introduction of bills.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent for introduction of bills? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TAX CUTS FOR PEOPLE AND FOR SMALL BUSINESS ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES IMPÔTS DES PARTICULIERS ET DES PETITES ENTREPRISES

Mr Eves moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 15, An Act to cut taxes for people and for small business and to implement other measures contained in the 1998 Budget / Projet de loi 15, Loi visant à réduire les impôts des particuliers et des petites entreprises et à mettre en œuvre d'autres mesures contenues dans le budget de 1998.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

A short statement?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): No, thank you. I made quite a lengthy statement today already.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Speaker: The government House leader moves adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1657.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Algoma	Wildman, Bud (ND)	Fort York	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Frontenac-Addington	Vankoughnet, Bill (PC)
Beaches-Woodbine	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)
Brampton North / -Nord	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Guelph	Elliott, Brenda (PC)
Brampton South / -Sud	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Halton Centre / -Centre	Young, Terence H. (PC)
Brant-Haldimand	Preston, Peter L. (PC)	Halton North / -Nord	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Brantford	Johnson, Ron (PC)	Hamilton Centre / -Centre	Christopherson, David (ND)
Bruce	Fisher, Barbara (PC)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Burlington South / -Sud	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Seniors Issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (Affaires des personnes âgées)	Hamilton Mountain	Pettit, Trevor (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Ross, Lillian (PC)
Carleton	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of the Environment, government House leader / ministre de l'Environnement, leader parlementaire du gouvernement	Hastings-Peterborough	Danford, Harry (PC)
Carleton East / -Est	Morin, Gilles E. (L)	High Park-Swansea	Shea, Derwyn (PC)
Chatham-Kent	Carroll, Jack (PC)	Huron	Johns, Helen (PC)
Cochrane North / -Nord	Wood, Len (ND)	Kcnoira	Miclash, Frank (L)
Cochrane South / -Sud	Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Cornwall	Cleary, John C. (L)	Kitchener	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Don Mills	Johnson, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Education and Training / ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation	Kitchener-Wilmot	Leadston, Gary L. (PC)
Dovercourt	Silipo, Tony (ND)	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	Pouliot, Gilles (ND)
Downsview	Castrilli, Annamarie (L)	Lambton	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Dufferin-Peel	Tilson, David (PC)	Lanark-Renfrew	Jordan, W. Leo (PC)
Durham Centre / -Centre	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Labour, Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / ministre du Travail, solliciteur général et ministre des Services correctionnels	Lawrence	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
Durham East / -Est	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
Durham West / -Ouest	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires	Lincoln	Sheehan, Frank (PC)
Durham-York	Munro, Julia (PC)	London Centre / -Centre	Boyd, Marion (ND)
Eglinton	Saunderson, William (PC)	London North / -Nord	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguee à la Condition féminine
Elgin	North, Peter (Ind)	London South / -Sud	Wood, Bob (PC)
Essex-Kent	Hoy, Pat (L)	Markham	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Essex South / -Sud	Crozier, Bruce (L)	Middlesex	Smith, Bruce (PC)
Etobicoke-Humber	Ford, Douglas B. (PC)	Mississauga East / -Est	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)	Mississauga North / -Nord	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Etobicoke-Rexdale	Hastings, John (PC)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Children's Issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (enfance)
Etobicoke West / -Ouest	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Speaker / Président	Mississauga West / -Ouest	Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Privatization) / ministre sans portefeuille (privatisation)
Fort William	McLeod, Lyn (L)	Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne	Grimmett, Bill (PC)
		Nepean	Baird, John R. (PC)
		Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Niagara South / -Sud	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Sarnia	Boushy, Dave (PC)
Nipissing	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Sault Ste Marie / Sault-Sainte-Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)
Norfolk	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Newman, Dan (PC)
Oakville South / -Sud	Carr, Gary (PC)	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Oakwood	Colle, Mike (L)	Scarborough-Ellesmere	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)
Oriele	Caplan, David (L)	Scarborough North / -Nord	Curling, Alvin (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Scarborough West / -Ouest	Brown, Jim (PC)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	Tasca, Joseph N. (PC)
Ottawa East / -Est	Grandmaître, Bernard (L)	Simcoe East / -Est	McLean, Allan K. (PC)
Ottawa-Rideau	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Simcoe West / -Ouest	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa West / -Ouest	Cullen, Alex (L)	Sudbury East / -Est	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Timiskaming	Ramsay, David (L)
Parkdale	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Victoria-Haliburton	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines, président du Conseil de gestion
Parry Sound	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Waterloo North / -Nord	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé
Perth	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Welland-Thorold	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Port Arthur	Gravelle, Michael (L)	Wentworth East / -Est	Doyle, Ed (PC)
Prescott and Russell /		Wentworth North / -Nord	Skarica, Toni (PC)
Prescott et Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Willowdale	Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Prince Edward-Lennox-		Wilson Heights	Kwinter, Monte (L)
South Hastings /		Windsor-Riverside	Lessard, Wayne (ND)
Prince Edward-Lennox-		Windsor-Sandwich	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Hastings-Sud	Fox, Gary (PC)	Windsor-Walkerville	Duncan, Dwight (L)
Quinte	Rollins, E.J. Douglas (PC)	York Centre / -Centre	Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique	York East / -Est	Parker, John L. (PC)
Renfrew North / -Nord	Conway, Sean G. (L)	York Mills	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister without Portfolio / ministre sans portefeuille
Riverdale	Churley, Marilyn (ND)	York-Mackenzie	Klees, Frank (PC)
St-D-G & East Grenville /		Yorkview	Sergio, Mario (L)
St-D-G et Grenville-Est	Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	York South / -Sud	Kennedy, Gerard (L)
St Andrew-St Patrick	Bassett, Hon / L'hon Isabel (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs	Nickel Belt	Vacant
St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)		
St Catharines-Brock	Froese, Tom (PC)		
St George-St David	Leach, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement		

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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of Ontario**
Second Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**
Deuxième session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 6 May 1998

Mercredi 6 mai 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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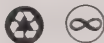
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 6 May 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 6 mai 1998

*The House met at 1328.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): My statement is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. A year ago your ministry issued a document called Making Services Work for People: A New Framework for Children and for People with Developmental Disabilities. In it, you promised families of children with developmental disabilities that you would reshape services to meet the needs of the developmentally disabled. In Ottawa-Carleton, the hope rose that waiting lists would be reduced and the needed services for children and their aging parents would be provided.

Alas, it has become a cruel hoax, Minister, as you refuse to provide any new funding to meet these needs. Under your restructuring initiative for Ottawa-Carleton 90, sheltered workshop spaces and 35 residential beds must be closed to free up funds to meet these outstanding needs.

The loss of these programs will place unacceptable stress on families who must look after their disabled children, especially for aging parents like Ruby Shortt, Judy and Don Holmes, Patsy Henry, Mary Savignac and Jean and Hartley Stoddart, who are today in the gallery watching the proceedings. These people have gathered over 3,000 names on a petition asking that you halt this destructive restructuring initiative and provide adequate funding to serve the developmentally disabled. I ask you, will you do this?

FONTHILL PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Mike Harris and his Tories' defunding of public education is generating fear across this province. I have in my hands now letters from 102 parents of students at Fonthill public school. They know full well that Fonthill public school is being targeted, as a result of this government's abandonment of the funding of public education, as one of the schools that may well be closed as a result of this government wanting to create a tax break for its wealthy friends but calling upon students like those at Fonthill public to pay the price for that tax break.

These families point out in their letter to me, and the 102 letters accompanying, that Fonthill public is more than just a school; it's a community unto itself. It's crucial to the wellbeing of the children of that student population that these types of small neighbourhood schools be allowed to survive.

They point out that bigger isn't better and that in fact Fonthill public's smaller size is one of its greatest assets. They point out that their school yard is safe and that, among other things, these things are going to end if that school is closed. They also recognize that the closure of this school is going to affect every other public school student in Fonthill, and the effect may well go on into Welland and Thorold.

These are 102 families which are clearly saying no to Mike Harris's policy of attacking publicly funded education because they're interested in the welfare and the education of their children.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN QUINTE

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): I rise in the House today to congratulate the management and employees of Halla Climate Control in Belleville, who, through hard work and dedication to quality, have created a world-class manufacturing plant capable of competing on the global stage.

That point was made obvious last week when the Korean-based automotive heating and air-conditioning component manufacturer broke ground on a 139,000-square-foot, \$20-million expansion to the company's second production site.

At the ground-breaking ceremony, Halla's managing director, Yong Hawn Park, said, "Belleville is truly one of the best cities in the world to live, manufacture and compete in the global marketplace."

The expansion was necessitated by a new contract that Halla had won from General Motors for 1999 and 2000.

The expansion will be a boon to my riding of Quinte, with the creation of 200 new jobs for area residents and an additional assessment for the city of Belleville.

While the Halla Climate Control expansion is the largest recent business expansion in my riding, it is far from the only one. A string of recent business openings that have included a new Zellers department store, a Denny's Restaurant and a No Frills grocery store are all proof that the dramatic improvement of the economy in the past three years has really helped out. I know yesterday's

budget will also help out the people in my riding of Quinte.

BUDGET

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): A message for voters: Who would have guessed that a budget-slashing province had so much money to spend or that a Reform-minded, Conservative government would devote so much to expanding social programs?

It was an eye-popping budget delivered by Finance Minister Ernie Eves on Tuesday. Meet the new caring, sharing Tories. After three years of radical surgery to rescue Ontario's economy from death's door, the government has suddenly turned its attention to getting re-elected. I must say, meet the Mike Harris hit-and-run budget. You hit them for three years, and now you're running for re-election.

Let me tell you what your budget meant to people in Windsor. The number one concern is health care. The number one concern is the condition of our emergency rooms in our Windsor hospitals.

May I tell you members opposite that your budget has done nothing to address the significant issues for hospitals in the Windsor area. Your announcements and re-announcements are nothing new to the people of Windsor because you've been doing this for three years. May I tell you that we have significant concerns, so that Mr Lyle Browning, who gets himself locked away with few or no nursing staff overnight for him in a hospital experience, has to look at yesterday's budget and say, "How is this going to change my life or that of seniors or young people or vulnerable sick people?"

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I would like to quote to you from the 1996 Ontario budget. This is Ernie Eves reading it at the time: "I am announcing today an enhancement of our child care funding that will provide over the next five years an additional \$200 million in support above current levels...the highest in Ontario's history." In that year, 1996, \$40 million of that \$200 million was to be spent — not a penny spent from the 1996 budget.

Now let me read to you from the 1997 budget. Ernie Eves reading from the budget said: "You know the \$40 million last year, let's forget about that. This year, we're going to provide an immediate \$40 million in assistance to lower-income working families with child care expenses and that will be financed from the \$40-million enhancement announced back in the 1996 budget. Well, we didn't spend it so now we're going to announce it again in 1997." Guess what? Didn't spend it.

Now, let me go to the 1998 budget in which Ernie Eves says: "In the 1997 budget I announced a \$40-million child care tax credit. We now intend to combine that with \$100 million of federal money and spend it this year." Three years running, the same money.

Under the original announcement there should be \$120 million in additional child care spaces. Not a penny has been spent. I doubt it ever will be.

WATER QUALITY

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): This week is Drinking Water Week. As a province of hundreds of lakes and rivers, we are very fortunate to have an abundance of clean water, as many parts of the world do not have such a resource.

Many people in my riding and elsewhere across the province will be taking part in activities this week that celebrate our abundance and what we all need to do to protect and preserve it: by not pouring hazardous materials down the drain, by fixing leaking faucets and by installing water-efficient fixtures. We must all do our share.

Although most municipalities in Ontario are delivering safe, clean drinking water to their communities, an achievement that is the envy of the majority of countries, the environment ministry carries out annual testing as part of the ministry's drinking water surveillance program. The ministry also directs funds to municipalities to improve their water treatment systems, such as the recent announcements of grants totalling more than \$12 million to five municipalities.

In fact, many of the people who help to maintain the excellent quality of our drinking water — the engineers, scientists and operators of treatment plants — are meeting this week in Niagara Falls at the annual convention of the Ontario Water Works Association.

I would encourage everyone across the province to be thankful and mindful this week of this very important resource. Let's not take it for granted.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The people of Ontario should know that the orgy of self-serving Harris government propaganda, paid for by the taxpayers of Ontario, continues unabated.

Radio advertisements extolling the virtues of the Conservative administration dominate the airwaves as Mike Harris uses hard-earned tax dollars to put out a clearly partisan message. Television commercials of the kind we have seen in months gone by are sure to follow. Full-page ads with an unmistakably partisan political slant appear in newspapers across the province, and even ads designed supposedly to convey important information for Ontario residents are tainted with political propaganda from the Harris regime — all at the expense of the taxpayers. Some publicly paid for commercials were even used to attack dedicated teachers who deliver education services in the front line.

Now the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board, headed by former Harris principal secretary David Lindsay, now supposedly a non-partisan civil servant, is sending out newsletters that read like a partisan pamphlet for the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario.

The Conservative Party is already awash in millions of dollars from its wealthy and powerful supporters who have shown their appreciation to the Premier for his

policies, which are of the greatest benefit to the rich and the privileged. It need not use the levers of government money and taxpayers' dollars to purvey a clearly partisan political message.

1340

VISITORS FROM CALABRIA

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I think members opposite will be happy to know that I'm not going to comment on the budget today. I'll have a chance to do that at other occasions.

What I want to do today, Speaker, as I've done on a couple of other occasions, is to take the opportunity to express pride in an area of southern Italy that I come from, the region of Calabria, and to tell you and the members that among the many towns that populate that beautiful region is a town called Mammola.

We are happy today to have representatives from Mammola: starting with the mayor of Mammola, Antonio Longo, who's accompanied by the head of the police services, Luigi Scarfò. I welcome them to the Legislative Assembly. They are accompanied by Carmela Ientile, the president of the Mammola social club, and other representatives of the club. I welcome them as well.

This particular town now has about 4,000 people. It is a town from which many people have come both here to Canada and to other parts of the world. It is a town that continues to reflect the best of southern Italy and Calabria both in the natural beauty and certainly in terms of some of the amazing artworks of world-renowned artists like Nick Spatari.

I take pride in being associated with a region of the world that has that richness in culture and welcome again our guests to the Legislative Assembly.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre): The Flame of Hope arrived in Oakville last week, signalling the start of the Ontario Special Olympics 1998 Provincial Spring Games. Tomorrow a group of enthusiastic, skilful young athletes will begin competing for a place in Ontario's sports history, demonstrating athletic prowess and the triumph of the human spirit that comes from doing their personal best.

Our community is honoured and proud that the torch has been passed to us this year to host over 700 athletes, their families, coaches, managers and officials. That pride is evident throughout our community, from the hundreds of volunteers and corporate sponsors to our own Halton Regional Police Service which is this year's official sponsor of the Special Olympics and celebrating their 25th anniversary of service. As the result of the efforts of our dedicated police force and many other community volunteers, this year has been the most successful of the Special Olympics in terms of commitment, volunteerism and fundraising.

I invite Ontario to join us in Oakville May 7 to 10 to cheer on our athletes and revel in their courage, teamwork and personal victories.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Thank you for the opportunity to raise a very important point of order with you. You will know that earlier, a couple of weeks ago, I indicated to you by letter that I would be raising the issue of government advertising of a partisan propaganda nature. I mentioned to you in the letter, if I may, that on a number of occasions I raised with you the issue of the use of taxpayers' dollars by the government of Mike Harris to place in print and electronic media advertisements which are of a clearly partisan nature.

The ministers of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Health, Education and Training, Community and Social Services, and Finance, among others, have engaged in the squandering of tax dollars on political advertising designed to shed a favourable light on the government's policies and legislation.

I recall that in response to one of my previous submissions to you in your capacity as Speaker, you stated the following in your ruling. I think this was extremely important, because while you found the government in contempt on one occasion, you also made an important statement to members of this House, both government and opposition, and for people in the future. You said:

"At this point in my ruling I want to express some personal concerns about the propriety of public funds being used to advocate, through advertising, a particular position on a matter that is before the House. Let me be clear: I am not speaking here about politically paid for advertising, but rather about funds that are contributed to by every Ontarian, regardless of his or her political view. Personally, I would find it offensive if taxpayer dollars were being used to convey a political or partisan message. There is nothing wrong with members debating an issue and influencing public opinion. In fact, it is part of our parliamentary tradition to do so. But I feel that it's wrong for a government to attempt to influence public opinion through advertising that is paid for with public funds."

I concur with that particular ruling you made, with the statement you made, Mr Speaker.

Since that time, even after your reprimand, we've had a continuation of this. As you know, I do not object to — in fact, I believe the government has the right to and should provide basic information to people; nothing wrong with that. Ordinarily, in a request for proposal, that would be fine. Ordinarily, if you were advertising, for instance, that you're selling Ontario savings bonds, which I hope people will buy, that is fine. But even in those ads now we see that partisan message creeping in.

It's largely not the ministers themselves, I think, who are responsible for that. It is the geniuses who work in the Premier's office and who advise the government, who

insist that they must make something particularly a propaganda message.

Here's an example again that appears —
Interjection.

Mr Bradley: No, I don't think ministers themselves, I say to my friend the Minister of Agriculture, are necessarily directly involved in this kind of thing. I think it comes from the central control. The central people want to get out a message.

As an example of this, here is a very legitimate advertisement on the surface. It's an advertisement which says, "Request for Proposals for Long-Term-Care-Facility Beds in Ontario." Nothing wrong with that, and we would hope that people would apply.

However, even within this ad you have the propaganda on the side telling why it's such a great program and why the government is doing such a good job. That's what I object to. That's what I think in our democracy is very unfair: for the government of Mike Harris or any government to use its propaganda organ even in ads of this kind. You spoil it.

I saw another one on property taxes where it said people could come to a particular public meeting. Nothing wrong with that. I saw another one, which was a good one — I want to say there are good ones and ones that are not — that said the government had made some changes to the family support program and there were three sessions where people could attend. Good ads. That's the kind of information that should be out there.

This is nothing but partisan propaganda.

I would like to get from the table, if could, the piece that I made reference to in my remarks, if I may receive from the table something that I submitted to the Speaker, and that is a newsletter from a government agency. That newsletter is put out by David Lindsay. David Lindsay used to be the principal secretary, a good Conservative with his party, and so I don't object to that when he was with the Conservative Party and that was his role. When he's principal secretary to the Premier, for instance, I don't expect he's going to be doing anything other than trying to make the government look good.

Here we have something called a Report to Taxpayers: Jobs and the Economy. This is from David Lindsay, and this is the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board. David Lindsay may have at one time been working for the Conservative Party or for the Conservative Premier. Now supposedly he's a civil servant. This could be a document that would be useful to investors and so on. It's just full of Conservative propaganda. I would find Tory advertising during a campaign which would be less partisan and less propagandistic than this particular document. I don't think it's right for governments to use its agencies to do this.

1350

Mr Speaker, I am going to resubmit this to you. I left a copy with you. I am going to leave this with you and I will send to you some other items as well as the text of some of the radio ads that have been on that talk about the tax cut. It's strictly propaganda. It has no other value at all except propaganda.

In conclusion, I want to say to you and to —
Interjection.

Mr Bradley: Oh, we have a new Speaker. The member for Durham East is the new Speaker.

I simply want to say to the government, I encourage you to provide basic, non-partisan information. That's your job. I will support that. I discourage you from —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The member for Algoma.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I rise to speak to this point of privilege with regard to Ontario government advertising and I want to speak specifically to the radio advertisements that ran in April.

I have a transcript which I can supply to you, Speaker, of a radio ad. This ad is about the government's tax scheme. I guess since most Ontarians haven't felt the effects of this government scheme, the government felt they had to resort to radio ads to inform them of how good they have it in Ontario.

I would argue that the language in these ads is blatantly partisan in nature. They are clearly designed to put forward the message on behalf of the Progressive Conservative Party, not the government of Ontario. It is not a message that is put forward to give information to taxpayers as they prepare their income taxes to be sent in before the deadline. These are not ads that are intended to give information to taxpayers. The taxpayers of Ontario have had to foot the bill for these ads, not the members of the Progressive Conservative Party. In our view, this is completely unacceptable.

One of the ads I have before me, a transcript, talks about the tax cuts and then it says: "And that's helped boost retail and housing sales and contributed to the creation of more than 340,000 net new private sector jobs since June 1995. That's more new jobs than the rest of Canada combined. Ontario tax cuts: They're working for all of us." I wonder if this is really non-partisan information or rather an attempt to advertise on behalf of a government policy that is set forward by the Conservative Party.

This is a time when the government is resorting to using taxpayers' dollars to get their message out. There were also ads about Bill 160 in which they bashed our education system and our teachers. At that time, as my friend from St Catharines mentioned, you made the statement that you had expressed concern about the nature, tone and propriety of advertisements or similar distributions made by the government. You indicated, Speaker, that you have reservations and strongly encourage this and any future government to consider the power and influence that a government wields when a government makes these messages to the public. We've also seen in the past the advertisements on the city of Toronto bill. At that time you also expressed concern about the use of public funds that were not available to all sides of the House.

The Premier seems to misunderstand the role of the taxpayers and the funding for the taxpayers. Are we to believe that this blatant partisan advertising should be provided at taxpayers' expense or, as the Speaker has

indicated in the past, if this kind of advertising is to be carried on, it should be done at the expense of the political party involved?

I submit to you the transcript of the radio ads to which I referred.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): The first point I would like to make, Mr Speaker, is if this is indeed a point of privilege, you should deny it on the basis that it has not been brought to the attention of the House at the first possible opportunity —

Mr Wildman: The House wasn't sitting in April.

Hon Mr Sterling: Section 115 of Beauchesne states: "A question of privilege must be brought to the attention of the House at the first possible opportunity. Even a gap —"

Mr Wildman: The House wasn't sitting in April.

Hon Mr Sterling: I'm sorry. There are rules that we follow in this House.

The Speaker: Members, I think there was a fair opportunity to put your positions forward. I think you should allow the government House leader to do the same.

Hon Mr Sterling: "Even a gap of a few days may invalidate the claim for precedence in the House." On June 9, 1969, Speaker Lamoureux of the Canadian House of Commons ruled that a matter of privilege which has been brought to the attention of that House was refused precedence because it was not raised at the earliest opportunity. At that time, the Speaker cited the 17th edition of Erskine May as stating, "A matter of privilege which claims precedence over other public business should be a subject which has recently arisen."

Erskine May goes on to provide an example of how "a matter which occurred during the recess was refused precedence as a matter of privilege because it was not raised at the commencement of the session," which was the earliest available opportunity.

On the occasion of a June 9, 1969, ruling, Speaker Lamoureux stated:

"In my view, the fundamental rule that a question of privilege should be raised immediately and without delay should be enforced. I appreciate that in some cases there might be extenuating circumstances, as where a newspaper is published in a remote section of the country, or if the offending article is published in a language other than that of the aggrieved member. In such circumstances a delay might be permitted. Such mitigating circumstances do not seem to exist in the case now before the House."

So too with the matter before us today. This is now the 11th full day, complete with routine proceedings, where the member has had an opportunity to bring this matter to the attention of the House. If it were an urgent and pressing matter, it should have been raised on the first day back or, at the very least, some time last week. Sorry, this is the 11th sessional day; I guess it's the seventh full day.

The ads in question have stopped running for some time, and though we contend that they did not represent a breach of privilege, their relevancy for this House no longer exists.

Precedence for this point of privilege should be denied and the House should be allowed to proceed with matters which are of a more pressing nature.

The Speaker: I'd like to reserve on this. I'll hear more points of privilege, but I'm going to reserve on it and report back to the House with respect to some of the issues. Would you please provide me with a copy of that newspaper as well as the copy you quoted from earlier? Thank you.

Point of order? Do you want to go again on the same issue?

Mr Wildman: Just a very brief response.

The Speaker: Okay. Member for Algoma.

Mr Wildman: The ad my friend from St Catharines referred to I believe appeared in today's paper, so the defence, if you want to call it that, put forward by the government House leader does not apply. This is the first possible date. The advertisements to which I was referring on the radio in April occurred during the recess, it's true. I was not in possession of a transcript. I provided you with a transcript. The defence put forward by the government House leader is one of technicality on timing rather than on the substance of the issues.

Mr Bradley: In regard to this as well, you'll know I provided you with a number of items that have been over a period of time. But in terms of this one — I provided a copy of this, the one from David Lindsay's organization — I received it today from an angry constituent who happened to get this newsletter — by the way, a constituent who is normally a supporter of the government, but that's neither here nor there — about this being propaganda. The other was an ad from the Toronto Star today — I imagine it's in other papers — and indeed the transcript is one which we've only been able to obtain very recently.

So some of this material has just been obtained recently, and I find it passing strange that the only defence the government has is some technicality to try to prevent this from being heard in the House. I do understand their embarrassment, however.

1400

Hon Mr Sterling: If members did not understand my initial argument, where I put forward that this is a matter with regard to the relevancy of the information, I'll put forward that argument as well.

This honourable member has raised a number of concerns about the advertisements that were put forward. I did not hear in his allegations that these were a matter of contempt or made in advance of consideration of legislative measures. I did not hear that in his allegations. I did hear him comment with regard to the fact that he did not like the information that was presented.

I would argue that the concerns of my colleague the member for St Catharines are unfounded and raise neither a prima facie case of privilege nor of contempt.

I would like to address the allegations that the advertisements in question are self-serving and partisan. Governments have a responsibility to communicate with the electorate and are often criticized when they do not.

We are not the first government to spend money on advertising. Indeed, if I look to the recent past, the Liberal government in 1990 spent almost \$36 million on advertising, and the NDP government in 1994-95 spent \$24 million on advertising.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Northumberland, come to order.

Hon Mr Sterling: The purpose of our advertisements, as undoubtedly of those of previous administrations, was entirely informational. The government was informing Ontarians at income tax filing time of further cuts to their personal Ontario income tax. The government situated that information within the context of its long-term fiscal policy.

If I may, I would like to emphasize the long-term nature of this policy. In May 1996, the Minister of Finance first stood up in this chamber and formally presented to this House this government's fiscal policy and philosophy: Tax cuts create jobs. We have an obligation to inform the public that this policy is indeed effective.

As Speaker Sauvé ruled in the Canadian House of Commons on October 17, 1980, on a point of privilege raised with respect to government advertising on constitutional reform: "The spending of public money cannot be the issue, but when a person or government attempts to interfere with [Parliament's] deliberations through spending public money, or otherwise, directly or indirectly, or act in contempt of the House, such action could constitute a *prima facie* case. However, the interference must be such that the member or the House is truly hindered or intimidated."

The advertisements in question in no way interfered with the deliberations of this House or hindered any honourable member of it. Further, the advertisements are in no way disrespectful of this House and its processes.

As has already been noted, the standing orders of the House, specifically standing order 21(a), provide that, "Privileges are the rights enjoyed by the House collectively and by the members of the House individually conferred by the Legislative Assembly Act and other statutes, or by practice, precedent, usage and custom."

Examples of privilege often cited in the House include freedom of speech, freedom from arrest and civil actions, exemptions from jury duty, exemptions from attendance as a witness and freedom from molestation.

In this House on January 22 of last year, Mr Speaker, you spoke to a precedent ruling made by Speaker Sauvé in the Canadian House of Commons, a ruling that dealt with concerns about the propriety of a government of Canada advertising campaign. As you noted, Speaker Sauvé ruled in that instance that there was no *prima facie* case of privilege and stated, "There must...be some connection between material alleged to contain the interference and the parliamentary proceeding."

Mr Speaker, I submit to you that in the matter now before us, there is no connection between the material alleged to contain the interference and a parliamentary proceeding. Indeed, the advertisements do not speak to

legislation but rather speak to a well-known, formally announced policy that has been debated in this chamber on more than one occasion and will undoubtedly be debated further. Thus I submit to you, Mr Speaker, there is no *prima facie* case of privilege.

Mr Wildman: When you cut through all of that verbiage, the government House leader is essentially saying that while he does not believe there to be a *prima facie* case of privilege in terms of the privileges of the members of this House, he does not deny that the Progressive Conservative government of Ontario has used taxpayers' money to advertise a policy of the Progressive Conservative Party.

The Speaker: This is absolutely debate at this point. Member for St Catharines, I'll give you a brief opportunity, but I want to move on.

Mr Bradley: Thank you. I wanted to help out my friend the government House leader by letting him know what I had raised with you because, to be brief, I didn't contain the whole letter. I'll read the last part of it. I said:

"Once again the Harris government has embarked upon an expensive political propaganda campaign using taxpayers' dollars, a campaign that any objective, informed observer would conclude is of a highly partisan nature."

I'll skip the next two lines. I'll go to the last line for the member.

"I am writing to request that you investigate the latest barrage of government advertising to determine whether, in your view, it is in contempt of the Legislature.

"In addition, I am asking you to comment upon the compliance of the Premier and his government with the request that partisan advertising be ended."

That is what I was asking. In fairness to the government House leader, I want him to know that.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): On the same point of order Mr Speaker: Now that you are taking in hand evidence, I just want to say that some of the advertisements — and I'll be happy to provide a transcript — start by saying, "The following is a paid political announcement." It then goes on to talk about the tax cut. Then it closes by saying, "The preceding was brought to you by the government of Ontario."

In my mind, Mr Speaker, that's fundamentally inconsistent. I will submit that evidence as well, as you look at it.

The Speaker: If you would provide me with that, I would appreciate it. Okay, that's it. I will take it under advisement and report back as soon as possible to the House.

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of personal privilege: I feel that my privileges as a member and as a critic for post-secondary education and training have been infringed, and I want to explain why.

On March 10 of this year my colleague from Sault Ste Marie —

The Speaker: For a point of privilege you needed to supply written notice, and I don't think I received written notice today from you.

Mr Lessard: On March 10 —

The Speaker: No. What's your response to the fact that I didn't receive written notice an hour before this session?

Mr Lessard: Oh, an hour before. Okay.

The Speaker: If you provide that tomorrow, I'll hear your point of privilege tomorrow.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Finance, the Deputy Minister. I want to speak to you today about one of the more glaring omissions in your hit-and-run budget yesterday.

One of your government's first moves was, as you know, to hit Ontario hospitals. You've hit them now to the tune of \$800 million in cuts and now you're trying to run from it. Because of those cuts, we've seen declining levels of care in our hospitals right across the province. We have seen patients stacked up in hospital corridors and we've heard from patients who are experiencing what happens when you lay off 10,000 nurses.

One of the things Ontario hospitals were looking for in yesterday's budget was some offer of assistance. Specifically, they were looking for \$300 million. They're about to run deficits in Ontario this year. There was nothing in your budget that's going to help them.

I want a direct answer from you. Since you're not going to give hospitals any more money, what do you suggest they do?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I would like to refer this question to the Minister of Health, who I am sure can provide details to the leader of the official opposition.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): We are in the process right now, actually, of having meetings with the Ontario Hospital Association. We're quite aware of the fact that a meeting was held this week. As has been indicated, the third year of reductions to hospitals, I think we need to confirm, will not be taking place, so we have not made those reductions to hospitals that are being talked about. In fact, any money — any money — that has been taken has been reinvested in health care. We have been reinvesting in priority services in the hospitals in the areas of cardiac care, cancer care, hip and knee replacements and dialysis. Every cent of money that has been saved is being reinvested in health services for people in this province.

Mr McGuinty: The Ontario Hospital Association, Madam Minister, tells us that this year 40% of Ontario hospitals are going to run deficits. You will know that Ontario hospitals are not supposed to be running deficits. Because of you, almost half are planning for them.

Alan Hudson, the CEO of Toronto Hospital — that's the largest hospital in this country — says that unless he gets more funding he's going to have to start shutting services down. That means closed wards, longer waits and reduced emergency services.

You've hit hospitals. Don't try to run from your responsibility here. What advice do you have for Mr Hudson at Toronto Hospital? What services are you recommending that he cut?

1410

Hon Mrs Witmer: We have received the additional information from the Ontario Hospital Association; in fact, I will be meeting with the Ontario Hospital Association. However, I would again indicate to you that we have reinvested \$350 million into hospital-based programs.

Also very recently, when we had the situation of the emergency room overcrowding, we very quickly had a task force up and going, in consultation and in partnership with the Ontario Hospital Association. The day the report was issued, we indicated within hours that we were prepared to respond to every one of the recommendations and that we would be reinvesting \$255 million.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mrs Witmer: That money is going to ensure that 1,700 long-term-care beds are going to be up and running in this province by the fall to take pressure off the acute care beds. It also means there are going to be community-based services available to the tune of —

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr McGuinty: Hospitals and patients paid very close attention to your budget, delivered in this House yesterday. There is nothing in that budget, nothing of any kind whatsoever, which is going to restore the number of nurses that you took away from our hospitals. In fact, there's no money there for any nurses.

The other thing is that there's nothing there to help our hospitals, which are about to face a very difficult choice: Do they run a deficit, something they're not supposed to do, or do they cut services? I told you about the Toronto Hospital. The Queensway-Carleton Hospital in Ottawa ran a deficit last year of \$400,000. This year they're going to have to run one of \$500,000 — either that or, once again, cut services.

Hospitals are waiting for your advice on this front and they want to know: Should they run a deficit or should they cut services? Which is it?

Hon Mrs Witmer: It's rather interesting that the leader of the official opposition is suddenly concerned about deficits. I think I need to make it clear that when a hospital submits a deficit, they also have to submit a recovery plan.

But I would ask you, why was your government, in the year 1989-90, not concerned about deficits? In the last year of your government you had 52 hospitals with deficits. In the first year of NDP rule we had 61 hospitals with deficits and in the last year of NDP rule we had 68. I don't think you are in any position to criticize this government. I would also indicate to you that at the same

time, you cut 11,000 beds from the system. Now you are forgetting that we've actually increased health care spending by \$1 billion.

BUDGET

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My next question is for the Deputy Premier. Yesterday, when you delivered your budget speech, you said 15 times, "A promise made, a promise kept." I want to give you the opportunity now to respond to questions relating to promises that you did in fact make.

During the televised leaders' debate at the time of the last election, Mike Harris, your Premier, said, "Certainly I can guarantee you it is not my plan to close hospitals." So far you have planned to close 35. My question is very straight up. For the benefit of all Ontarians, would you please tell them, did you keep your promise not to close hospitals?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): As the leader of the official opposition will know, the health care system is being restructured. He was part of a government, and indeed the NDP were part of a government, in which during your 10 years of office you closed 11,000 hospital beds in the province of Ontario but you didn't do anything about the administrative functioning and cost of closing those institutions where the beds were closed.

The health restructuring commission was put in place to go across the province and talk about eliminating waste and administrative costs in the health care system in the province. They're amalgamating certain hospitals together as we shift towards long-term, community-based care. What have you got against spending \$1.2 billion in long-term care?

Mr McGuinty: Here's another one, Deputy Premier, that's just as straight up as the last one. You promised in the Common Sense Revolution, "There will be no new user fees." Since coming to power, your government has created \$225 million in new user fees for seniors and for the poor. Furthermore, you've delisted \$170 million worth of OHIP services. What was covered before by OHIP will now have to be covered by people out of their pockets. That's what we call a user fee.

My question once again is very simple. Keeping in mind that you promised no new user fees, did you keep that promise?

Hon Mr Eves: I believe the commitment was to create no new taxes. In fact, we have created no new taxes in the province of Ontario.

The leader of the official opposition would know a lot about tax increases, sitting in a government that increased taxes 33 times between 1985 and 1990. The people over here to your left would also know a lot about them. They increased taxes 32 times between 1990 and 1995. In three budgets, we've reduced taxes 66 times, more than the two of your tax increases together in a 10-year period of time.

Mr McGuinty: This is becoming painful to watch, but I'll throw out another one.

Interjections.

Mr McGuinty: It's just that they said 15 times that they kept all their promises, so I wanted to give them an opportunity to set the record straight.

When it comes to gambling, on February 8, 1995, Mike Harris told the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, "My friends, I am committed to this: No casinos." Today you have plans to open up 44 neighbourhood casinos right across the province. You said no casinos. Now you plan to open up 44.

Once again, very straight up, Deputy Premier, tell me, did you keep your casino promise?

Hon Mr Eves: There hasn't been a new casino opened in Ontario.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Eves: Name it.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Eves: For a party that let hundreds upon hundreds of roving casinos operate in the province each and every single day, and contributed only \$10 million to charities, to now complain about 44 charity gambling establishments that will raise \$200 million for charities, not the \$10 million that your hundreds raised, but will contribute \$480 million to the health care system in addition to the \$19.2 billion being spent today — and you didn't contribute one cent when you were in government.

In yesterday's budget we rhymed off 15 major commitments that we made to the people of Ontario that we have delivered upon. I know that coming from the Liberal Party of Ontario, you would find that very difficult to believe.

1420

PAY EQUITY

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is also for the Minister of Finance, and I hope we get some answers on some of these questions because they're very serious. The packaging on your budget was, oh, so pretty yesterday, but then we remembered that with your government it's not what you say, it's what you do. Last year what you did was you tried to abolish proxy pay equity for the lowest-paid women in this province. The courts caught you. They said it was unconstitutional and they forced you to pay the money that was due to those lowest-paid women.

I looked in yesterday's budget and I saw that you are going to finance 31 new corporate tax write-offs. You're going to find the money for 31 new corporate tax write-offs, but there is no mention anywhere in the budget about finding money for the lowest-paid women in Ontario, who are due their pay under pay equity. Can you tell me, how can you find the money for the corporate tax write-offs but not for the lowest-paid women in Ontario?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I don't know what the leader of the third party refers to as corporate tax write-offs. If he is referring to the small business men and women of this province and he doesn't think they deserve a tax break, he should say so. I

think he's going to severely restrict even more than he has to date the percentage of the populace he can look to for support in the next provincial election, if that's possible.

There are a lot of hardworking men and women in Ontario, who pay taxes, who are law-abiding citizens, who deserve a break. It's their money, not your money, not the government's money, not anybody else's money. All we're doing is allowing them to keep more of it.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Hold on. Member for Riverdale, member for Beaches-Woodbine, come to order, please. I wanted to hear the Minister of Finance's response and I couldn't. Supplementary.

Mr Hampton: As I said, it's not what this government says, it's what this government does.

The reality of what they're doing is that they have no trouble finding money to finance write-offs of corporate taxes across this province. We've been keeping track of them: 50 of the tax breaks are for corporations. That's what's happening here. But the reality for women is this: We're talking about some of the lowest-paid women in Ontario. We're talking about women who work in child care centres, about women who work in home care, about women who do some of the most importance services in this province and who are some of the lowest paid, and your government can't find the money to help them. In fact, you're going to pay KPMG consulting for advice on whether you should take the money from child care workers, from home care workers, from people who work in homes for the aged.

Minister, can you tell us how much you're paying KPMG to give you advice on how not to pay the lowest-paid women —

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

Hon Mr Eves: I have no idea how much KPMG is being paid by a particular ministry. If you'd like to send me the details, I'd be more than happy to look into it for you and see that the appropriate minister responds to you.

With respect to the issue of pay equity, this government is spending half a billion dollars a year on pay equity, more than any government ever before in the history of the province of Ontario, and that includes the great Bob Rae government that supposedly was so committed to this principle.

Mr Hampton: The minister makes a valiant effort to cover up his tracks here. The reality is your government has no trouble finding money to finance corporate tax write-offs, but these are some of the lowest-paid women in the province. They do some of the most valuable work in the province, in home care, in health care, in child care, in community services, and you're paying a corporate giant like KPMG consulting big money to tell you how to avoid having to pay the money, the pay, that these women are due under the law.

Do they have to do what the hepatitis C victims did? Do they have to come back and go after your government until they get you to do the right thing? What are you going to do, Minister? Sacrifice these lowest-paid women to give your corporate friends more write-offs?

Hon Mr Eves: The leader of the third party keeps on talking about corporate write-offs and the contents of yesterday's budget. Would he consider the \$170 million given to children's aid societies to be corporate write-offs? Would he consider the \$140 million this year and \$200 million next year to modest-income, hardworking, taxpaying families that are finally going to get a break on child care, which your government refused to do, a write-off to corporations?

Most of the initiatives in the budget yesterday were aimed at modest-income, hardworking, taxpaying Ontarians. They were aimed at small business men and women. If you have something against small business men and women, you should stand up and say so. We will stack our record on pay equity against yours any day, dollar for dollar, position for position: half a billion dollars a year, \$140 million in retroactive payments made with respect to pay equity. That's what we've done in the last year: \$640 million —

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister of Finance, come to order, please.

1430

NURSING STAFF

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My next question is also for the Minister of Finance and it is along the same theme. It is not what you say, it's what you're doing. We heard all this about child care before. You said it last year, you said it the year before. No money made its way into the hands of families who need child care.

My second question is about nursing care. You announced that you are going to add \$5 million for community nursing. We called officials in the finance ministry. We said: "Is it going to home care? Is it going to public health units? Is it going to community health centres?" They said they didn't know. They had no idea where it was going. But then we looked at the budget from two years ago and we discovered that you cut \$9 million from nursing care. So you don't even know where the \$5 million is going to go this year. It doesn't even make up for \$9 million that you cut out of home care two years ago. I want to ask you, where is this \$5 million in nursing going to go? Into home care? Community health centres? Where is it going to go?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I refer this question to the Minister of Health, who will explain to him what is happening with the money.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): We have been meeting with the nursing profession in Ontario. We have indicated that we are prepared to respond to the needs they have identified so that we can continue to provide the high-quality patient care in this province, and recently we made an announcement that we could provide more paediatric oncology nurses at the Hospital for Sick Children. We also indicated that we were going to set aside \$1 million to train more emergency room and critical care nurses, and the announcement yesterday is an

announcement that is extremely important: The \$5 million that was announced yesterday is going to ensure that we have nurses available, nurse practitioners available in the community-based system and in some of the underserved areas. We are going to be working with the nurses so that we can determine the criteria.

Mr Hampton: I repeat it's not what they say, it's what they do. I want to contrast what this minister just said with what has actually happened. Over the last two and a half years this government has taken \$800 million out of hospitals. Most of that \$800 million was in the form of 10,000 nurses who are no longer in the hospitals. Here we got a paltry announcement from the government yesterday about \$5 million to be reinvested in nursing care after they took \$9 million out of home care nursing services, after they had taken the equivalent of \$800 million out of hospital nursing services.

Minister, can you tell us please, how is \$5 million going back in going to make up for the \$9 million in nursing services you've already taken out of home care and the \$800 million in nursing care you've taken out of hospitals?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would again stress that as a result of consultations with the nursing profession, we are now creating more opportunities for nurses in this province than ever before. In fact, it was in February this year that we officially proclaimed the nurse practitioner legislation, and this \$5 million which was allocated in yesterday's budget, which is a very important announcement, is going to ensure that we can provide nurse practitioners in this province to communities that are most in need. I would also remind you of our \$1.2-billion announcement regarding community care-based services. That is going to create and additional 7,900 nursing jobs. There will be opportunities, and we are responding to the needs that the nurses themselves have identified.

Mr Hampton: I say again, you have to watch what they say and then watch what they do. We've seen this government take \$9 million out of home nursing care. We've seen them take the equivalent of \$800 million out of hospitals. What that's done is, sick people are being pushed out of hospitals sicker and faster than ever and are being told, "Go home and you'll be able to get home care." But you've cut the home care budget. We didn't see any announcement, we see nothing here, for nurses, more nurses or more nurse services in home care. The announcement you've made in terms of putting nurses back in the hospitals is completely inadequate. Minister, what is the \$5 million you announced yesterday going to do about the deteriorating services in hospitals because there aren't enough nurses, and the deteriorating services in home care because there are not enough nurses?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Obviously, all the information is not reaching across the way. I would just remind the member that nursing opportunities have increased under our government. In fact, the number of individuals who are being provided with community based services means that we have been able to expand the number of nurses working in that field.

I would also remind the member that as a result of our Healthy Babies, Healthy Children initiative we have more public health nurses than ever before helping people in communities. These are people who are most in need, babies that are most at risk.

If you take a look at every area of the health budget, you will see that more and more nurses are being used in order that they can provide the high-quality care that is so necessary for people in this province.

REVENUE FROM GAMING

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Minister of Finance. I see by the budget that you plan to move aggressively on slot machines. You indicate in the budget that when you fully implement the slot machines, Ontarians will lose about \$1 billion in slot machines. That's how much money they will leave in the slot machines.

Coincidentally, I might add, all the tax cuts yesterday added to \$1 billion. So you cut taxes by \$1 billion and you are clawing back \$1 billion through slot machines. I can only assume the government has done some economic analysis of the negative impact on the economy of taking \$1 billion from the hardworking taxpayers in the slot machines.

Will you agree today to make public the economic studies that would indicate the negative impact of people losing \$1 billion in slot machines in Ontario?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): With respect to tax reductions costing the Ontario government money, since we came into power in 1995 the revenues from all forms of taxation in Ontario have gone up by \$4 billion while we've reduced taxes some 30 times prior to yesterday. When you reduce the taxation level on people — I know it's a foreign concept to the Liberal Party and the NDP — you actually encourage them to invest in the province, to hire people. It brings in more money, people spend money; that in turn creates more employment and more people contribute to the economy and have the dignity and meaningful occupation of a job.

I know you find that difficult to understand. You mentioned in the preamble to your question that we gave away \$1 billion in tax cuts. It doesn't cost money, it raises money when you reduce taxation.

Mr Phillips: Back to the question. In the budget, you indicate that people will lose \$1 billion. They're going to put \$1 billion that stays in the slot machines, \$1 billion coming from hardworking taxpayers in Ontario. Surely when hardworking taxpayers lose \$1 billion in slot machines, it has to have a negative impact on the economy. I can only assume that you are embarking on this having done some studies that indicate what the impact is of Ontarians losing \$1 billion in slot machines. This is a huge grab on the taxpayers of Ontario, \$1 billion. I want to ask a very simple question: Will you table the studies to show the people of Ontario the negative

economic impact of them losing \$1 billion in Mike Harris's slot machines?

Hon Mr Eves: The member for Scarborough-Agincourt is making a lot of assumptions in posing his question. I have never relied on, nor has the government relied on, the income from slot machines to balance the books, to provide essential services to the people of Ontario. What we have said is that as we set up permanent charity sites across Ontario, when fully implemented, several years out, \$480 million that the province will see in revenue from those will go directly on top of what we're spending on health care today. That is a commitment we've made to the people of Ontario. We will deliver on the commitment.

1440

JOB CREATION

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): My question is to the Minister of Finance. In your glossy brochure yesterday about jobs in Ontario, you take credit for various job growths. One of them that you talk about is trying to take credit for 250 new jobs at Babcock and Wilcox in Cambridge. You've been running ads about this. There was an ad, in fact, that ran with the Premier. You put it in your embarrassing throne speech, and now it's the lead story in your expensive brochure.

But as we're discovering more and more with you, it's not what you say, it's what you do, and what you did — or didn't do, actually, in this case — is you didn't mention that the new jobs are only a fraction of what was lost in massive layoffs at this company in 1996, when a contract that had been announced by Premier Mike Harris fell through.

Minister, my question to you is simply this: If you're taking credit for the 250 new jobs, shouldn't you also be taking responsibility for the more than 800 jobs that were lost at Babcock and Wilcox in the time that you were in government?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): We will be quite prepared to stand on our record when the time comes with respect to job creation. The member will be quite aware that between the period of February 1997 and February 1998, 265,000 net new private sector jobs were created in the province of Ontario, the largest 12-month increase in the entire history of the province, over 340,000 net new private sector jobs created to date, and we're expecting that this year will top last year's record performance.

We will deliver on our commitment to create jobs in the province of Ontario. The people of Ontario can judge us on it at the end of the day.

Mr Silipo: Minister, I'll be happy to debate your job record now, down the line, at the end of your term. That's not what my point is to you today. My point to you is that we have another clear example that it's not what you say, it's what you're doing that people need to notice.

We found in this particular announcement promises that just aren't there. When we look at the fact that you're

bragging on the one hand, the first success story that you put in here about this company bragging about the fact that they have increased by 250 jobs — we're happy that they have increased by 250 jobs, but you conveniently forget that that company went from 1,700 jobs during the time that we were in government to 825 jobs in the time that you were in government. As the Kitchener-Waterloo Record said:

"Major layoffs hit the plant in 1996, after two major international power deals worth hundreds of millions of dollars fell through. The largest setback was a deal in Indonesia which was announced in early 1996 by Premier Mike Harris during a Team Canada tour."

Again, my question simply is this: If you're prepared to take credit for all the success stories, why aren't you taking responsibility for the losses of jobs, as happened in this case? Answer the question this time.

Hon Mr Eves: I said that at the end of the day we will be judged on the entire job creation record during our term in office, for the entire term. We're quite prepared to stand on our record.

Speaking of doing what you do and doing what you say, why did you keep two sets of books when you were in government? The only person besides —

Interjections.

Hon Mr Eves: Excuse me. Between you two opposition parties —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order.

WATER EXTRACTION PERMIT

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. MPPs have received many calls in their constituency offices over the last few days with respect to the company that wants to export Great Lakes water to Asia. My question is this: What is being done by your ministry to rectify this situation?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I cannot emphasize this enough: I do not support, nor does my government support, the exporting of Ontario water resources or any diversion from the Great Lakes.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Members for Hamilton Centre, Hamilton East, Ottawa West, come to order, please. I can't hear the minister. And I don't need any help throwing members out. I have a few on the other side who are just as bad. Please come to order. Member for Lambton, you may be one of them, actually, so please come to order. Minister.

Hon Mr Sterling: As you know, Mr Speaker, the whole matter with regard to the exporting of water is a federal responsibility. However, in the interim, while we are dealing with this situation with the federal government, we are considering a number of options to prevent the situation from ever happening again. In addition, I understand the federal government plans on taking action with regard to this issue in the very near future.

We are fortunate that the proponent has indicated — in fact, he was calling my office shortly after this issue broke — that he would withdraw his permit, and we are in the process of dealing with that matter.

Mr Barrett: I am reassured by your ministry's position because, like many Ontarians, many of us in the House are concerned about this very important resource. Much of my riding borders Lake Erie and is also under Lake Erie, and I have an abiding interest and a deep concern for our rich resources of fresh water.

Minister, is it wise to rely on the federal government for assistance on this matter?

Hon Mr Sterling: I believe it requires action on behalf of both levels of government.

With regard to the federal government, I wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lloyd Axworthy, earlier this week to ask him what he could do with regard to this situation, which neither government has ever faced before. I spoke yesterday with Mr Axworthy and I spoke with Mr Axworthy again today, and he is announcing in the House of Commons today that is he referring this matter to the International Joint Commission under article III of the International Boundary Waters Treaty Act in order to ensure that some action can be taken by the federal government or the provincial governments in the future.

I believe this is a very, very serious matter and that both governments should work cooperatively towards seeking a solution which will see that this never happens again.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): My question is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, in your first budget you hit universities and colleges with a cut of \$400 million. Yesterday you put back a small amount of money for universities. You gave virtually nothing to community colleges.

For the past two years, colleges have been coping with your cuts. They have cut student support services, they've reduced staff, and they've been given no help with severance costs. Now, one third of our community colleges are facing deficits and they have no place to go for more cuts except to cut the programs. Today we find out that St Lawrence College in Kingston is looking at shutting down all of the science labs at their Brockville campus, and this is just the beginning.

I ask you what you have to say today to the colleges that are in a deficit position just trying to run their day-to-day programs. What do you say to St Lawrence College, "Just go head and shut down the science labs"?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I think we had several initiatives in yesterday's budget with respect to the college and university sectors and with respect to assisting and training of young people in both the college and university sectors.

There is the \$150-million program Access to Opportunities, a response to industry and to demand for meaningful — and high-paying, I might add — jobs for young people

in the province of Ontario; \$30 million this year for strategic skills investments, relating again directly to both the college and university sectors; \$150 million over 10 years for graduate and research awards in the post-secondary sector; a \$135-million acceleration of the R&D challenge fund to match the Canada Foundation for Innovation; and the \$9.5-billion fund, of course, with respect to Ontario workplace training, a lot of which relates directly to the college sector; a \$30-million confirmation —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. Supplementary.

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Mrs McLeod: None of those funds are going to help keep the science labs open at the Brockville campus of St Lawrence College. None of them are going to help gerontology programs keep going or early childhood programs get going, and none of those funds are going to replace all the student support services that have already been lost because of the cuts you made to college budgets.

There is only one answer you've given to the colleges and, for that matter, to the universities, and that is to say, "Just charge the students more tuition." That's your answer to the cash-strapped colleges. You want the students to cover the cost of the damage you've done. You have forced colleges into debt and now you want to force students into even greater debt.

There is less than nothing for college and university students in yesterday's budget. Your new student assistance plan is only words, and the only thing new about it is the name. You didn't put any money into this so-called new student assistance plan to cover the cost of skyrocketing tuition. Minister, how do you have the gall to talk about a new student assistance plan when you are forcing students into greater and greater debt and offering them no relief at all?

Hon Mr Eves: There were several community colleges centred out in yesterday's budget announcements of several kinds. There were nine community colleges referred to in the learning disabilities program that is going on over the next five years, announced by Dr Bette Stephenson. We announced very specific projects at Georgian College, at Conestoga College, at Humber College, and more are coming, on the way. The announcements will be following shortly.

With respect to the program that she talks about with respect to student assistance, I agree that it's time the federal government and the provincial government put their efforts and their money together to have one comprehensive program that will best assist students, instead of working at cross-purposes.

Very directly, I say to her, in response to the fact that there's no new money in there, there is in fact some \$300 million of new money in that program.

CHILD CARE

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is to the finance minister. Minister, in the budget

yesterday you said you are tripling the number of children who benefit from child care assistance in Ontario. Well, like so many other things we've heard today, that's what you say but that's not what you are doing. You are taking the same old \$40 million that you've announced for three years — let me show you: in the 1996 budget, in the 1997 budget, in the 1998 budget; the same \$40 million — and you're saying now that you're going to wrap that up with \$100 million of federal dollars and you're going to get a cheque to as many families as you can before you go to the polls.

Minister, what I want you to tell us is, how is a maximum of \$85 per child a month under the age of seven going to help the 30,000 Ontario families right now who are waiting for a child care subsidy to get the child care they need?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I'll refer the question to the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): As the honourable member should know, the first instalment of that child care tax credit was in place for last year's tax year. Families were able to claim that. We have enriched that by \$100 million for this year. Next year that will be enriched yet again, up to \$200 million. That is money for low-income families who have never been able to access that support before. If she doesn't think someone with annual earnings of \$5,000 a year deserves a thousand bucks to help with child care, she should say so.

Ms Lankin: Let me say that the minister should tell everyone that they've scrapped the tax cut, because just like we told her last year, people can't afford to pay for it up front. That's why you're moving to what is an income supplement. And you know what, Minister? I agree with an income supplement, but call it that. A thousand dollars is not going to buy quality licensed child care for one family in this province.

We have a deficit in this province. We're spending \$155 million less on quality child care in this province than when you came to power. You have cut child care payments. It is not what you say, it is what you do. Your record is abysmal. This \$40 million has been recycled three times. It's washed out. It means nothing to the families of this province.

Hon Mrs Ecker: With all due respect, I appreciate the honourable member's commitment and concern about child care, but we are spending over \$500 million on child care; plus \$140 million for the child care supplement, which she said; plus the \$25 million for LEAP, the Learning, Earning and Parenting program, which will result in new subsidies; plus the additional \$10 million for Ontario Works day care, which is on top of the \$30 million last year for Ontario Works day care.

We have 14,000 more licensed spaces today. We've made it a mandatory service for municipalities. Every time child care advocates and the people out there in child care said, "Do more for parents," this government has been doing more for parents, and they still keep saying that it's

not working. With all due respect, it is, and more parents are going to be able to access the child care supports they need through the actions of this government.

TECHNOLOGICAL TRAINING

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): My question is for the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology. I, like many of my colleagues, was pleased and excited to see that our government is recognizing the importance of science and technology by creating a Ministry of Energy, Science and Technology. Sixty-seven per cent of new jobs created in Ontario between 1987 and 1997 were in the high-tech, knowledge-based industries.

I know at first hand the demand that exists for such skilled workers. In Scarborough, Eli Lilly recently opened a new research facility housing both an analytical lab and a bioanalytical lab. It required over 100 new R&D employees.

Minister, as you're probably aware, this is biotechnology week in Ontario, and I'd like to know what your ministry has done since its creation to support biotechnology in Ontario.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): I thank the honourable member for the question. I think it's a very important question, given that over the past decade, as the honourable member pointed out, 67% of the new jobs in Ontario have been created in the high-tech, high-knowledge-based scientific areas of our economy. Some 60 companies in the biotechnology field met with me over the last couple of months to tell us what the government needs to do to help foster an innovative society, an idea-based and knowledge-based society.

One of the major issues that was addressed yesterday in a big way in Mr Eves's budget was the skill shortage. Some 10,000 jobs go unfilled today in Ontario. You mentioned Eli Lilly. That's just one of hundreds of companies literally, some of them very small, some of them very large, who cannot find the workers today. Part of the problem is a backlog with respect to applications in our colleges and universities.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mr Wilson: The Minister of Finance announced yesterday unprecedented money to double the number of spaces in computer software engineering and biotechnology fields and in a whole pile of high-tech fields —

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr Gilchrist: Minister, you've outlined several measures which obviously demonstrate your increased awareness of the biotechnology sector, but you also have a mandate to support research. I wonder what specific measures in yesterday's budget will result in new biotechnology research in Ontario.

Hon Mr Wilson: It's difficult to get into in the short time we have. Science and technology were the clear winners, along with health care and education, in yesterday's budget — some 20 expenditures in yesterday's budget, more than at any point in the history of our

province: a \$30-million critical skills fund to address the needs of young people in this area, to make sure they have access to the college and university positions in order to get the skills required to work in biotechnology and high-tech things; \$150 million to the Access to Opportunities program to, as I said, double the number of spaces in computer science and high-demand engineering programs; \$29 million in annual grants to universities to increase students' access to post-secondary education and jobs; \$75 million to increase graduate scholarships for university students in specific science-related fields; and another \$75 million to recognize the excellent brain power we have in this province and ensure that we stop the brain drain.

This is what the colleges and universities and the companies asked for. Our government delivered in a big way in yesterday's budget.

The Speaker: I remind members, if you're going to ask the questions, you should stay in your seats so you can hear the answers.

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Yesterday, your finance minister on 15 occasions stated, "A promise made, a promise kept." Let me remind you of a promise made on June 5, 1995, three days before the election, to the *Toronto Star* by your Premier: "I don't think you'll find a cent cut out of the environment. We were able to find \$6 billion in cuts without cutting the environment." Mike Harris, June 5, 1995.

Minister, with your own budget numbers yesterday you have reduced the budget of the Ministry of the Environment by an additional \$15 million. That brings it to a total of \$115 million since you have taken office. You have been the minister who has overseen the total dismantling of the Ministry of the Environment. You have made more cuts to the ministry than any minister in the history of this province. You have abandoned air quality, water quality and land quality in this province. You have neglected and abandoned any commitment to the environment.

Minister, do you believe you have kept the promise made by the Premier on June 5, 1995, that there would be no cuts to the environment?

Hon Mr Sterling: We have done an amazing number of changes to the Ministry of the Environment structure: the legislation; the regulations with regard to environmental control, monitoring and enforcement in this province. And you know what? We're doing better for less.

Mr Agostino: You aren't doing better for less. You're doing absolutely nothing for the environment. Prosecutions are down over 50% since you took office; fines are down over 50% because you don't have the staff to enforce it.

The Environmental Commissioner said, and I quote her report of a week ago: "Little substantive improvement in

the actions taken by the province towards protecting the environment."

Minister, you have been slammed by every credible organization in this province for your abandonment. You abandoned Windsor. The report said Windsor has chronic air quality problems. You abandoned Windsor with your cuts yesterday. You have abandoned Hamilton; you have abandoned Sudbury; you have abandoned Toronto. You've shown absolutely no vision or any leadership in this.

Again, your Premier made it clear there was not going to be a cut in the environment. It comes down to a couple of things: Either you as minister don't have the clout or the ability to defend your ministry in cabinet, and I would suggest that you then hand in the keys to the limo and let someone else do the job, or clearly your government has no commitment to protecting the environment.

I ask you again, do you believe that the promise made on June 5, 1995, by the Premier that there would be no cuts to the environment has been kept, in view of the \$115 million that you've cut since you've taken office?

Hon Mr Sterling: We're even doing better than what the Premier promised. What we're doing is providing better environmental protection in this province at a lower cost to the taxpayer. We're proud of that.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): My question is to the Minister of Finance. Yesterday's budget was an example of some pretty packaging, and in it, you wrapped up a couple of \$9-billion goodies for post-secondary education and training. But it's not what your government says, it's what your government does.

What you said is that you're going to create a new student assistance package. What you're doing is re-shuffling existing money. You're combining it with money that you hope to get from the federal government and telling students or having them believe that there's going to be an improvement. But the federal Liberals have been cutting funding to colleges and universities. Why should students believe that there's going to be any improvement? What is it that's new in your announcement yesterday?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): As I said in part in response to the member for Thunder Bay, with respect to the \$9 billion, it is the money that has already been announced by the federal government in its Millennium Fund of \$1.2 billion, which is there — that's the commitment on behalf of the federal government — the amount of money that the province of Ontario is already spending on an annualized basis with respect to student aid, plus \$300 million of additional money.

Mr Lessard: Minister, you've tried to fool Ontario students, but they're smart enough to believe that what you say is not what you do.

Here's what the Canadian Federation of Students had to say yesterday: "This government continues to allow tuition fees to rise and refuses to invest new money in

student aid. It is absurd that the government would attempt to take credit for existing federal funding."

There are no new dollars here. Why should students believe anything you say? Why should parents believe anything you say when you're not telling the whole story?

Hon Mr Eves: There are 300 million in new dollars in yesterday's announcement, and in addition to that, there are all kinds of other things we did with respect to post-secondary education and training for young people in yesterday's announcement.

We went through some of them before. We can go through them again if you wish: \$150 million for the access to opportunities program, unless you don't think those high-paying, high-tech jobs are important for the additional 17,000 students per year who will graduate out of that program. If you don't believe in that, say so. Another \$150 million with respect to scholarships and endowments for post-secondary graduation over 10 years. If you don't believe in that, say so. Thirty million dollars for learning-disabled students — implementation of the \$30 million for learning-disabled students at nine community colleges and four universities across the province of Ontario. If you don't believe those students should have a post-secondary education and get the assistance they deserve, say so.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): My question is to the Minister of Health. I'm on the leading edge of the baby boom and there's a rapid population increase that's going to set a demand on health care. We're living longer, whether you would like to or not. As this population increases, the government is recognizing that demand by investing in 1,700 temporary hospital beds as in your significant announcement made recently also on long-term beds. At this time, can you tell us how your recent announcement will increase both the quantity and the quality of those long-term beds?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): As the member has indicated, last week we did make an announcement indicating that we were investing an additional \$1.2 billion into the long-term-care services in this province.

I believe the question related to how this is going to increase the quantity of long-term-care beds. This announcement is going to ensure that 20,000 new beds are going to be built in communities across the province. It will also mean an additional 13,000 beds are going to be renovated in order that they can meet the new design standards.

In the member's own community of the region of Peel, it's going to mean 2,287 new beds and in the first call for a proposal, it will mean that 1,000 new beds will be built within the next two years. Not only are we going to improve the quantity of beds available, it's the first award of new beds in 10 years. This area was totally neglected by previous governments. We also have new design standards.

Mr Spina: The 850,000 people in Peel county are very appreciative that we are now getting our fair share of funding for beds and for health care.

Talking about the RFPs that you spoke about, Minister, would you be kind enough to please explain how the request-for-proposal process will work and what kind of time frame the government is following to ensure that we get these beds in our region as soon as possible?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Obviously, we need these beds. These beds are certainly going to help alleviate the overcrowding in emergency rooms and also the situation in the acute care beds in the hospitals.

We did this week on Monday already put an ad in the paper indicating that there was a process. We have indicated we will be building 6,700 beds immediately. We have called for tenders and in subsequent months we will be calling for additional tenders in order that we can get those 20,000 beds open as soon as we possibly can.

Any individual in this province is eligible to submit a proposal. There will be very strict standards that they must adhere to. We certainly look forward to having those first beds open in the summer of 2000 and in the spring.

1510

PETITIONS

INSTITUTE OF PSYCHOTHERAPY

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the report has been submitted by the Health Services Restructuring Commission recommending the closure of the Institute of Psychotherapy established over 30 years ago in Kingston, an 18-bed cost-effective hospital which provides voluntary treatment to patients with resistant depression disorders to learn to cope with their problems at \$130 per bed per day provincial funding, an average of 25% of the cost of other psychiatric treatment centres; and

"Whereas the Institute of Psychotherapy supplies efficient and effective short-term care to residents of Kingston and the surrounding area, it also provides their service to patients from Ottawa, Cornwall" and other places in eastern Ontario. "This hospital also provides anonymity to health care professionals who would/ could otherwise face receiving treatment at their place of employment with colleagues or, the worst scenario, not seek the lifesaving treatment they require;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the September 1998 closure of the Institute of Psychotherapy in Kingston, Ontario, and have the commission review the cost-efficient and effective short-term care provided to patients who would not/could not seek treatment for this life-threatening illness. As a result of their work, this hospital provides a much-needed service to the community and an inexpensive operation to the province of Ontario as a whole."

It's signed by about 200 citizens, and I affix my signature as well.

CANCER PREVENTION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Last month, April, was Cancer Awareness Month, and I have petitions here which read:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas cancer claims in excess of 20,000 lives annually in Ontario alone; and

"Whereas cancer treatment costs Ontario taxpayers in excess of \$1 billion annually; and

"Whereas the best way to fight cancer or any disease is through preventive measures; and

"Whereas the Ontario Task Force on the Primary Prevention of Cancer has advised the government to set realistic and realizable targets for phasing out the release of environmental toxins; and

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly on April 18, 1996, passed a resolution to that effect with support from all three parties;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"The Premier and the Minister of Health should immediately implement the April 18 resolution and strike a working committee to begin the task of setting realistic targets for the phase-out of persistent bio-accumulative environmental toxins."

I have about 10,000 signatures here and I proudly affix my name to this petition.

LAKE ERIE FISHERY

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): I have a petition signed by over 500 people due to the good work of the Fort Erie Conservation Club and Port Colborne Conservation Club about the bass fishery. It reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, strongly protest the early opening of the black bass season in Lake Erie. Fishing before and during spawning will do great harm to fish stocks."

In support of my constituents, I affix my signature.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): I have a petition here signed by over 3,000 residents in Ottawa-Carleton.

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ottawa-Carleton Restructuring Advisory Group has prepared a preliminary report for the Ottawa-Carleton Development Services Restructuring Project; and

"Whereas the consultation process was selective and limited; and

"Whereas those who require services are being pitted against those who have services; and

"Whereas service to one group should not be at the expense of another, regardless of age or language; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Community and Social Services' corporate agenda is one of wholesale destruction of the support system for the vulnerable; and

"Whereas this corporate agenda will threaten the health, safety and likely the lives of many disabled people;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to stop this destructive restructuring project and provide adequate funding for quality services to the developmentally disabled."

I affix my signature to this.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It's a declaration of support to eliminate income-contingent repayment plans.

"Whereas income-contingent repayment plans increase the period of repayment for graduating students, thereby causing lifelong debt in many cases; and

"Whereas income-contingent repayment plans have inherent inequities that make low-income earners pay more for their education; and

"Whereas income-contingent repayment plans provide the government with a mechanism to increase tuition fees and deregulate tuition; and

"Whereas in every international example where income-contingent repayment plans have been implemented they have been accompanied by massive increases in tuition fees, such as the 584% increase in Australia; and

"Whereas income-contingent repayment plans do not reduce the debt levels of students and in many cases increase debt levels;

"We, the undersigned, do hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately scrap the pursuit of income-contingent repayment plans and immediately address the levels of debt by improving the current Ontario student assistance plan."

I've affixed my name to that petition as well.

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas nurses in Ontario often experience coercion to participate in practices which directly contravene their deeply held ethical standards; and

"Whereas pharmacists in Ontario are often pressured to dispense and/or sell chemicals or devices contrary to their moral or religious beliefs; and

"Whereas public health workers in Ontario are expected to assist in providing controversial services and promoting controversial materials against their consciences; and

"Whereas physicians in Ontario often experience pressure to give referrals for medications, treatments

and/or procedures which they believe to be gravely immoral; and

"Whereas competent health care workers and students in various health care disciplines in Ontario have been denied training, employment, continued employment and advancement in their intended fields and suffered other forms of unjust discrimination because of the dictates of their consciences; and

"Whereas health care workers experiencing such unjust discrimination have at present no practical and accessible legal means to protect themselves;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers, prohibiting coercion and unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary to the dictates of their consciences and establishing penalties for such unjust discrimination."

I've signed that.

CHIROPRACTIC HEALTH CARE

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislature and to the Premier, to Health Minister Elizabeth Witmer and members of the Ontario Legislature.

"Whereas the Ministry of Health has recently strengthened its reputation as the Ministry of Medicine through its \$1.7-billion three-year agreement with the Ontario Medical Association; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is restricting access to alternative cost-saving treatments for patients of the province; and

"Whereas two recent reports commissioned by the Ministry of Health called for increased OHIP funding to improve patient access to chiropractic services on the grounds of safety, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness; and

"Whereas over one million Ontario adults now use chiropractic services annually, increasingly those with higher incomes, because of the cost barrier caused by government underfunding; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has shown blatant disregard for the needs of the citizens of Ontario in restricting funding of chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize the contribution made by chiropractors to the good health of the people of Ontario, to recognize the taxpayer dollars saved by the use of low-cost preventative care such as that provided by chiropractors and to recognize that to restrict funding of chiropractic health care only serves to limit access to a needed health care service."

I'm pleased to join 2,000 of my constituents in signing this petition.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have petitions forwarded to me by Nancy Hutchison, who

is the health and safety coordinator of District 6 of the United Steelworkers of America. The petition is signed by Steelworkers from across Ontario. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas each year in Ontario, approximately 300 workers are killed on the job, several hundred thousand die of occupational diseases and 400,000 suffer work-related injuries and illnesses; and

"Whereas during the past decade the Workers' Health and Safety Centre proved to be the most cost-effective WCB-funded prevention organization dedicated to worker health and safety concerns; and

"Whereas the WCB provides over 80% of its legislated prevention funding to several employer-controlled safety associations — and less than 20% to the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre recently lost several million dollars in funding and course revenues because of government changes to legislated training requirements; and

"Whereas 30% of Workers' Health and Safety Centre staff were laid off due to these lost training funds; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre now faces an additional 25% cut to its 1998 budget, which will be used to augment new funding for employer safety associations in the health, education and service sectors; and

"Whereas the WCB's 1998 planned baseline budget cuts, for safety associations and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre, will be disproportionately against the workers' centre and reduce its 1998 budget allocation to less than 15% of the WCB prevention funding;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the WCB's proposed cuts and direct the WCB to increase the Workers' Health and Safety Centre's funding to at least 50% of the WCB's legislated prevention funding; and

"Further, we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the WCB to significantly increase its legislated prevention funding in order to eliminate workplace illness, injury and death."

I proudly continue to support these workers and sign my name.

1520

RURAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I continue to receive petitions about rural health care.

"Whereas there is an urgent concern about the future of community hospitals located in Dunnville, Hagersville, Simcoe and Tillsonburg; and

"Whereas distance, weather and doctor shortages are serious barriers to people in rural areas accessing emergency services and health care; and

"Whereas local communities have worked for years to establish, maintain, improve and modernize hospital, physician and other health services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to adopt a rural health policy to deal

with these problems and to protect the health care rights of rural communities, and that hospital boards, district health councils, the Health Services Restructuring Commission and the government of Ontario adhere to this rural policy.”

I hereby affix my signature to this petition.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Ministry of Community and Social Services is currently engaged in a restructuring process across all communities in Ontario which will affect all people and their families supported by developmental services; and

“Whereas the consultation process was selective and limited; and

“Whereas those who require services are being pitted against those who have services; and

“Whereas service to one group should not be at the expense of another, regardless of age or language; and

“Whereas the MCSS ‘corporate agenda’ is one of wholesale destruction of the support system for the vulnerable; and

“Whereas this corporate agenda will threaten the health, safety and likely the lives of many disabled people;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to stop this destructive restructuring project and provide adequate funding for quality services to the developmentally disabled.”

This has been signed by many people — hundreds — from my riding, and I thank them for that.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas each year in Ontario approximately 300 workers are killed on the job, several thousand die of occupational diseases and 400,000 suffer work-related injuries and illnesses; and

“Whereas during the past decade the Workers’ Health and Safety Centre proved to be the most cost-effective WCB-funded prevention organization dedicated to worker health and safety concerns; and

“Whereas the WCB provides over 80% of its legislated prevention funding to several employer-controlled safety associations — and less than 20% to the Workers’ Health and Safety Centre; and

“Whereas the Workers’ Health and Safety Centre recently lost several million dollars in funding and course revenues due to government changes to legislated training requirements; and

“Whereas 30% of Workers’ Health and Safety Centre staff were laid off due to these lost training funds; and

“Whereas the Workers’ Health and Safety Centre now faces an additional 25% cut to its 1998 budget, which will be used to augment new funding for employer safety

associations in the health, education and services sector; and

“Whereas the WCB’s 1998 planned baseline budget cuts, for safety associations and the Workers’ Health and Safety Centre, will be disproportionately against the workers’ centre and reduce its 1998 budget allocation to less than 15% of the WCB prevention funding,

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the WCB’s proposed cuts and direct the WCB to increase the Workers’ Health and Safety Centre’s funding to at least 50% of the WCB’s legislated prevention funding; and

“Further we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the WCB to significantly increase its legislated prevention funding in order to eliminate workplace illness, injury and death.”

This is sent in by CEP Local 32, Smooth Rock Falls, and I’m proud to affix my signature.

Mr John O’Toole (Durham East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I’ve been waiting to make a statement on behalf of the member for Scarborough Centre, to present the Safe School Act petition —

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): I guess there’s something new every day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

1998 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]): I believe we have unanimous consent not to have the clock show time today, in respect for the leader in his response to the budget.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I will take the opportunity today on behalf of my party, the Ontario Liberal Party, to deliver a response to the budget introduced in this House yesterday by the Minister of Finance. I will take some time in doing that because I think it’s a subject that warrants some careful consideration. I will be urging the people of this province to take their time as they review the budget. Most people of course won’t see the actual document itself; they will learn about it bit by bit through the media. But I will ask them at the end of the day always to trust their own instincts and to understand that this government has a record. That record is very clear, especially when it comes to what has happened to our hospitals and to our schools and what’s happening in our communities right now when it comes to things like downloading, property taxes going up and the casinos, 44 in fact, being placed in communities throughout this province.

Just big-picture stuff, because I think a lot of people outside this Legislature who don't pay a tremendous amount of attention to politics would get this impression, the impression was that what we've had in years past, the first three years, is a government that has cut, cut and cut some more. They've attacked our hospitals; they've attacked our schools. Yesterday we had a budget where they talked about spending a lot of money. I think it's important to look at that.

First of all, people's impressions about the first part are absolutely correct. I've taken to calling this budget a hit-and-run budget. In fact, for three years this government has hit the province, hit Ontarians, especially hit our schools and our hospitals; now they're running for re-election.

When we look at this budget, it's important of course to understand what the government is trying to do. They're trying to give the impression now that they're about to give something back. They're trying to give the impression that the economy is running on all eight cylinders because of something this government has done, in particular because they've cut taxes. I want to touch on those things.

First of all, I looked at the budget yesterday, and I looked at the promises. I would say this budget, just roughly speaking, must consist 90% of announcements that have been made in the past. This government has achieved some special expertise, when it comes to making an announcement, and then reannouncing it and then reannouncing it over and over again. Announcements made are cheap. There's no cost to them. This government makes them on an ongoing basis. So there's not much new in this budget at all. That means it's "steady as she goes" for this government. That means that when it comes to education, no good news; when it comes to our hospitals in Ontario, no new good news.

The other thing I noticed, and I think this is probably unique in the history of this province, is that this government made promises found in this budget that are to be delivered on over a two-year period, a three-year period, a four-year period, a five-year period, an eight-year period, and in fact there were four promises, as I counted them, that are to be delivered on over the course of the next 10 years. If you have a government that says, "We're going to spend \$150 million on this important area vital to the future of the province and we're going to spend that over the course of the next 10 years," suddenly the promise really pales, understanding that this amount of money is to be spread over such a lengthy period of time.

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The other thing to keep in mind is I thought it was just a little bit presumptuous on the part of Mike Harris to make promises to be delivered on over the course of the next 10 years. What are we talking about? He'd have to win three more elections to be there for 10 years. It's just a tad presumptuous — not only presumptuous, but I must also say for myself, my colleagues and I think for Ontarians, that's a frightening thought.

It's important to understand too that in these expenditures there were two, possibly three, maybe even more,

promises of delivering federal dollars into programs. They're going to spend all kinds of money when it comes to the student aid program and a training program which was based on federal dollars. They're trying to take credit for spending federal dollars, money that's going to come from the federal government to be spent on a program which you would get none the less in the province of Ontario.

It's important to cut through that smoke and that heavy film and through all of the fireworks and all of the celebration connected with this budget and understand that really there's not a heck of a lot in there that's new. There is a lot that is to be delivered on over the course of up to 10 years, and some of those promises are conditional upon the feds coming up with money for their own programs.

The other thing to keep in mind too is that this government says, "It's our tax cut that has this Ontario economy now firing on all eight cylinders." Apparently, there is no other influence on our province which would help our economy to enjoy this period of recovery. I just want to remind Ontarians that what Mike Harris or Ernie Eves or any member of the government says is, "The reason our province is doing so well, the reason we're creating jobs in this province, is because of our tax cut." I want Ontarians to understand the other important influences on our economy.

First of all, the governor of the Bank of Canada has been very kind to all Canadians. He has kept interest rates low.

Secondly, the rate of inflation in this country has been low. That too has nothing to do with Mike Harris.

The third thing is that the people to the south of us, Americans, have enjoyed a sustained economic recovery. They happen to be our biggest trading partner. They happen to buy most of our goods and our services. When you combine that with a low dollar, our exports have shot up. What does that all mean? It means that too has been a tremendous influence in helping us to enjoy an economic recovery.

So when Mike Harris says, "It's my tax cut that has sent us down this path," it's important for Ontarians to understand that this is not the case and that there are many other provinces in Canada which are enjoying a wonderful economic recovery as well, and that has nothing to do with Mike Harris.

The other thing that is important for Ontarians to keep in mind is that Mike Harris will say: "Listen, I've given you a tax break. It has put more money in your pocket."

When I've had the opportunity to talk to people in this province, one of the questions I raise with them is, "So what have you done with your tax cut?" Most people will say, "What tax cut?"

I say to them: "Did you pick up a fridge? Did you buy a stove? Did you put a down payment on a new car?" Again, people say to me, "What tax cut?"

There was a story in one of the papers today. The heading is, "Tax Breaks Barely Felt by Middle income Family." Sometimes we become removed from everyday reality —

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): It's better than a tax increase.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Quinte.

Mr McGuinty: Sometimes it's not a particularly flattering thought, but most people in this province don't pay a lot of attention to politics and they hope that somehow we are doing things inside this place that will be of benefit to them.

I just want to tell you about a family outside there that's talked about in today's paper. There's a family here, a couple. They have three children. They have a combined household income of \$62,000. The tax break for them means they'll pay about \$444 less provincial income tax this year than they did last year. It says that comes to \$18 every two weeks. The father says: "That won't go far in a family with three children. I wouldn't even notice that. It would probably get us a hamburger and fries."

There's something else that people should understand when it comes to the tax cut. I can tell you this from my own personal experience. This middle-income family — two parents, three kids — say they're going to get \$18; that will be the benefit of the tax cut. I want that family and others in the province to contrast that with what's happening in our hospitals. For the sake of \$18 now — okay? — we're losing our hospitals. For the sake of \$18, we're having trouble admitting our patients in our hospitals. For the sake of \$18, we've laid off 10,000 nurses. For the sake of \$18, we're losing junior kindergarten programs in Ontario. For the sake of \$18, we're losing adult education programs in Ontario. That's \$18 every two weeks.

Perhaps I could just tell you about a couple of things that have happened in my own community, and I see there are a couple of my colleagues here from Ottawa-Carleton. I heard that in Ottawa, Mr Speaker, and you'll be familiar with this, the city of Ottawa has just increased fees for the use of swimming pools by children. This is the result of the downloading exercise.

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [children's issues]): They've paid for swimming pools forever in Mississauga and it's —

The Acting Speaker: Member for Mississauga South.

Mr McGuinty: I've also learned that they're now going to charge more in our parking meters in the Ottawa area. Again, this is something in order to pick up the slack as a result of the downloading.

Any parents today who have children who are pursuing or who hope to pursue post-secondary studies have got a real fear now. They've got to be concerned about the cost of post-secondary education. This government is going to drive up tuition fees by 60%.

I think it's important for Ontarians, when they talk about a tax cut, first of all, to try to calculate how much really is there. I think they'll quickly assess that there's not much at all. Then I'd ask them to contrast that with the damage being caused to our schools and our hospitals, and I'd ask them to calculate the user fees that they're going to be paying. I'd ask them to compare it against property tax hikes that they're about to experience, against the new

user fees, maybe at the library, maybe at the swimming pool, or maybe it's the parking meters downtown.

But believe me, if Mike Harris used to tell us something that we all understand, he used to say there's no free lunch. That means that if you're going to give away some money on the one hand, you're going to have to make up for it. Somebody at some point along the line is going to have to recover that money elsewhere.

Coming back to this notion of this being a hit-and-run budget, for the past three years Mike Harris has hit our schools, our hospitals. Now of course he's running for re-election. I'm telling Ontarians one very simple thing: You can't trust him. Mike Harris is going to say now: "I'm the health care guy. I'm the education guy. Trust me on those scores."

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Everybody remembers Mike Harris at the time of the last election. He didn't say, "I want to be your Premier because I care about your health care," and he never said, "I want to be your Premier because I care about the education that we're going to deliver to our kids." He never said those things. He said, "I care about the size of government and I will cut it down to size, whatever it takes." If that means our schools are going to have to pay a certain price, then so be it. If it means our hospitals are going to have to take it on the chin, then so be it. That's what this guy is all about. He's the cut guy. That's what he does best. He's not a builder. He's not a grower. He's not there for health care and he's not there for education. Oddly enough, he's there because he's against government.

He doesn't believe that government can be a powerful positive influence in our lives. He doesn't understand that the very purpose of government is to help us do things like deliver quality education to our kids and to make sure that when we get sick, when our bodies break down, when people are injured in accidents, there's a health care system there to help them. He doesn't understand that and that's not why he's in government in Ontario.

One of the things I always try to do is to remind myself why I'm here, why I'm in this place and why I enjoy the privilege of leading my party. It's because we're here for the people who are outside of this place. I don't want to talk so much about the numbers in the budget for a moment.

Mr Rollins: Of course you don't

The Acting Speaker: Member for Quinte, I don't want to tell you too many times to keep quiet.

Mr McGuinty: I want to talk about its impact on people. I want to talk about the impact of this budget on everyday, ordinary, average Ontarians. I want to talk about some of the people I've met along the way and their impression of this budget.

First of all, I want to talk about a young couple I met. They're young parents with three children; their oldest is four years of age. That child is just right for junior kindergarten. The mother has heard about the studies, and she's even so keen that she's actually read some of them, about how important junior kindergarten is to making sure

our kids are ready to learn, making sure they can do so well in primary, secondary and even post-secondary institutions. In fact, this mother has also heard that the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, that leading business group, came in to see this government, the Harris government, and pleaded with them to fund junior kindergarten. She heard that her school board may offer junior kindergarten and then on the other hand that it may not. What she wanted from this budget is that she wanted to know that this government would make enough funding available to make junior kindergarten available in her community and in fact in every community right across the province.

This budget doesn't do that, so what I'm doing today, on behalf of those young parents, citizens of this province, who have placed all of their hope and optimism in their children and have learned that their government has not done what they think is very important — they have not funded junior kindergarten to ensure that it is available to their child in their community.

I also want to tell you about a couple I just met, about 15 minutes ago, sitting in the gallery over here. They gave me a letter. These parents are in their 80s and they have a 43-year-old son. Their concern is for their 43-year-old son, who is mentally disabled. I just want to read part of this letter. It says:

"Our son Peter was born in Toronto 43 years ago. He was diagnosed at birth with Down syndrome and a missing lung. On the advice of our doctor, we applied to Orillia for placement if it should become necessary but we never took that option. After his birth, we joined the local association in Richmond Hill called Thornhaven. We became active in volunteering, raising money for the new school building, helping in various programs etc. We raised a fine young man even if he was handicapped. We saved the government a lot of money and are still doing so.

"Since Ontario decided to close the institutions, families like ours have been left to fight with little success for all of the services we worked so hard for in the 1950s and 1960s.

"The crisis-oriented system has let us down and will continue to be unfair unless more money is made available. The real needs of real people need to be determined and their right and requirement for adequate funding recognized" — and this is important — "as a priority over cutting taxes."

The last sentence in that paragraph in a letter written by an 80-year-old couple is, "You know, we pay a lot of taxes too."

Do you know what they were looking for in this budget, just a couple out there doing their best? A child was born to them that had some serious problems. They assumed that responsibility with tremendous relish. They took on that responsibility, looked after their child. They're in their 80s; he's 43 years old now. They're getting old, they're growing tired. They can't manage. They want a bit of help from this government. They don't want a tax cut. This government has been cutting services to the disabled, cutting the special services at home program. They don't

want special services at home, in fact. Do you know what they want? They want to know that when they can no longer do it, their child will find a home somewhere.

We don't have that service today in Ontario. We have been cutting that. We've been proceeding with a process of deinstitutionalization. What that elderly couple wanted from this budget was some money to help fund some kind of home or an institution where their son might live after they have gone or after they can't manage. Just an ordinary couple. That's what they were looking for, and this budget let them down.

Now I want to tell you about a son I know. He's 51 years of age. His mother is 83. She's frail. She can't cope on her own. He's got to get her into a long-term-care facility and he's worried sick about her care. You know who is taking up most of the slack here? It's his wife. She's providing a lot of the care to the son's mum. She's exhausted. She works, they've got children of their own. They are living in Ottawa-Carleton.

The mother is right now on a waiting list of 1,500 people for long-term-care beds. You know what this budget does? The budget confirms something that was announced. In Ottawa-Carleton, they're going to pay for 1,300 beds. There's a waiting list of 1,500; the government has promised 1,300. Furthermore, those beds are going to be delivered to us over the next eight years. The first bed won't be available for at least two years. I can tell you that this man, after my conversation —

Hon Mrs Marland: No, the answer's in the paper now and it takes about —

The Acting Speaker: Member for Mississauga South.

Mr McGuinty: I can tell you that in my conversations with this man, he has nothing against tax cuts, but he's saying long-term-care beds should come first.

He raised a very important question with me this morning when I chatted with him. Do you know what he said? He said, "If we have enough money to speed up the tax cut, why don't we have enough money to speed up the construction of new long-term-care beds?"

Here's another couple that I met. She's 67, he's 73. He's seriously ill. He's been in hospital now for seven weeks. She goes in every day. She helps to feed him, she helps rearrange his bedding, makes sure he's got enough to drink. She's also, by virtue of being in the hospital every day for at least eight hours, become somewhat of an expert as to what's happening inside our hospitals. She has taken to helping out other patients with some basic things like feeding and rearranging their bedding because she has noticed that there aren't enough nurses in the hospitals. She's wondering about what would happen if she couldn't go in to be with her husband. She notices that there aren't enough nurses. Those who are there are run off their feet. Those who are there have morale problems. Do you know why? Because they can't do the kind of work they're supposed to do. They don't have enough time. She also notices that many of the nurses aren't there on a permanent basis — kind of contract work. A lot of them spend time at different hospitals.

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Do you know what she was looking for in this budget? She was looking for more nurses in our hospitals. Do you know how many nurses are going to be delivered into our hospitals as a result of this budget? Zero. We let go 10,000. Everybody who has spent any time in a hospital knows that if you don't have nurses, you don't have care. It's a very simple equation. We've lost 10,000 nurses, which means we've lost a tremendous amount of our ability to provide care. What this woman was looking for was nurses in our hospitals, and this budget let her down.

One final story, this one about a 24-year-old: He's a new Canadian, he's here in the Toronto area, he's got his grade 9 equivalent and he wants to complete high school. He is married and the father of two young children. This man hates welfare in a way that nobody in this Legislature will ever understand. He's embarrassed to be on it and he's ashamed, but he has no options. You know what he wants to do? He wants to make his kids proud of him. He wants to complete his high school — 24 years of age. He wants to pull up. He didn't come over here for a handout. He's not looking for a free lunch. He wants to pull himself ahead.

He had been pursuing education at the adult high school full-day program. The Toronto Board of Education is cutting that program. They are cutting that program because of this government's cuts.

You know what that man was looking for on behalf of his whole family? He was looking for a message in this budget that this government felt that was an important program, not only for him but for up to 20,000 adults who used to be enrolled in those programs across this province; that this government felt those were important programs. There is nothing in this budget that will restore that program. He is shut out. He's on his own. That's what he was looking for from this budget and this budget did not deliver.

What could Mike Harris have done in this budget? He could have invested in nurses to help patients in our struggling hospitals. When it comes to nurses, do you know what this government announced? They're putting together a Nursing Services Task Force.

Interjection: A study.

Mr McQuinty: Yes, a study. The people of this province don't want a Nursing Services Task Force; they just want nursing services. They understand that taking away nurses equals taking away care. It's not a complicated issue.

Do you know what else they could have done in this budget? They could have invested in our schools to help prepare our kids for the challenges of the next century. The government now is becoming fairly adept at using the language. They are now using things like "knowledge-based economy." They're saying that brain power is important. In all humility, I've been talking like that now for two years, so I can only suspect that they picked it up on this side of the floor. So they're using the words but they're not putting their money where their mouth is.

One of the things we understand now is that the early years are of vital importance in getting our kids on the right track. If this government is really serious about education in Ontario and making sure that our kids can embrace the 21st century, they will make sure that they provide enough funding for every school board in every community in this province to offer junior kindergarten and they're still not doing that.

You know the other thing that I'm convinced of? When it comes to our budget, do you know what Ontarians really want? They want balance, they want fiscal responsibility and they want compassion. They want their government to look after their dollars, but they also want their government to look after health care. They want their government to look after education. They want their government to make sure it does everything that it can reasonably do to care for kids who are growing up at risk, to care for our disabled, to care for our homeless, to care for our seniors and to care for people who happen to be out of work. That's what balance is all about.

Perhaps nothing symbolizes the one-sidedness of this budget and the one-sidedness of this government's priorities better than the special booklet than accompanied the budget. I'm not sure if this sets a new precedent in Ontario, but together with the budget documents there was a booklet issued. It says *Jobs for the Future, Today: The Ontario Success Story*, and inside that booklet there are some, I am prepared to admit, real success stories for Ontario businesses and that's a good thing. I'm always very pleased to hear when business is succeeding.

But you know what? I looked at my package and I thought, "There must be an oversight." I said, "Where are the other booklets?" Because this one says *Jobs for the Future, Today*. I was looking for the one that said *Education for the Future, Today: The Ontario Success Story*. I looked in here and it was nowhere to be found. Then I looked for the booklet that said *Health Care for the Future, Today: The Ontario Success Story*. It wasn't in here.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): It can't be written.

Mr McQuinty: It couldn't be written. Clearly, not even this government has the nerve, the audacity and the effrontery to try to pretend that in Ontario we have a success when it comes to health care and education.

Something that I made reference to today in question period was the fact that on 15 separate occasions when he delivered his budget speech the Minister of Finance said, "A promise made, a promise kept." Mike Harris said during the campaign — and it's important to remember this because this government is deathly afraid of history. They don't want to be made to confront what they have said in the past, and of course, I take special delight in reminding them of what they said and I'm going to do that again right now.

Mike Harris said during the campaign that he could cut taxes and balance the budget without cutting health care. He has cut \$800 million from our hospitals and he has fired 10,000 nurses. He said that he wouldn't close

hospitals. He's closing, so far, 35, and it's early days yet, I'm afraid, when it comes to hospital closures in Ontario.

He said that he wouldn't cut education. He's cut it by \$1 billion. He specifically said that he would never cut classroom spending. I say, ask the parents of the 60,000 four-year-olds who have been shut out of junior kindergarten whether or not Mike Harris has touched classroom spending. I also say, ask the 20,000 young adults who have been shut out of adult high school whether or not Mike Harris has cut classroom spending.

Mike Harris also said, and this was another promise, that he wouldn't cut funding to seniors or the disabled, and he said that he wouldn't bring in user fees. The fact is that he has brought in \$225 million in user fees for drugs for seniors and our poor and our disabled.

He said he wouldn't make cuts to the environment. He specifically said that. In fact he cut the budget by 44%. He's laid off one third of the staff in the Ministry of Environment, and with yesterday's budget we learn of still another cut, this one to the tune of \$15 million more cut from the Ministry of Environment.

He said that he wouldn't cut a nickel — I recall the words now — from agriculture. He's cut \$45 million. That's a lot of nickels.

He said he wouldn't cut culture and the arts. He's cut \$88 million. Yesterday he came up with a new fund of some kind. Mike Harris is kind of like the arsonist. He starts the fire and then he shows up later on and says, "Here, I'm going to help you put it out." That's what he did to hospitals. He caused them damage. He says, "Give me a little bit of money." He's the guy with the bucket. He's going to throw a bit of water on it. He has caused terrible problems in our schools. He says he's going to help resolve that.

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He caused some serious problems to culture and arts. Let's be clear. This is not a government that has any understanding of the fundamental value of culture and arts in Ontario, and I'm not talking now about the economic advantages of our culture and arts community. This is a government that is given to utilitarianism. Everything is measured in terms of its immediate economic value, and for that reason this government will never, ever understand the important role that culture and the arts play in ending shape to the quality of life that we have come to enjoy in Ontario. They'll never understand that.

They said they'd never cut funding to the north. They cut \$49 million. They said that students who attend university in Ontario shouldn't have to pay more than 15% of the real cost of their education; today they're up to paying 35% of the real cost of their education.

Mike Harris didn't keep those promises, and for the sake of brevity, those are just 10 that I have listed there. But maybe I could throw in one more, and this was the mother of all promises made by Mike Harris. He said that if he broke any of his promises he would resign. That makes promise number 11. That one he broke as well.

When I left the chamber yesterday and went outside and had an opportunity to speak with some of the media

out there, I also had the opportunity to bump into some of the representatives of Ontario farmers, and I can tell you they were not a happy group. They told me that this government has let them down. They told me that this government does not understand that although they're not asking for a lot, they expect the government to, at minimum, understand that agriculture is the second-largest industry in Ontario and that they're going to need a little bit of help, at least in so far as research and development is concerned, to keep our farmers on the cutting edge. They were looking for something in this budget to help them.

You know what they heard just recently from the Minister of Agriculture? The minister said, "There's going to be an increase in your funding." They thought this was wonderful news. But then they learned yesterday that — do you know what this increase really consists of? It's special one-time funding to help out with the greatest natural disaster that has occurred in living memory, and that's the ice storm that occurred in eastern Ontario. This government is trying to pass off one-time special assistance funding as somehow being a boost to agriculture in Ontario. I think the farmers of Ontario are beginning to gain some better understanding and insight into the real intentions of the government and, in particular, the Minister of Agriculture.

Let's talk about the deficit for a minute. This year Mike Harris is going to run a deficit of \$4.2 billion. That means he's adding another \$4.2 billion to our debt. Let's understand what has been happening outside of Ontario. First of all, the federal government has balanced its budget and now they're looking at what to do with their surplus. The government of the United States of America balanced their budget and they're expecting a \$50-billion surplus. Most of the provinces in Canada have already balanced their budgets. Governments around the world are balancing their budgets and getting ready for the future and making important investments in health care and education. That's what our competitors are doing.

We still have a deficit in Ontario. For those Ontarians out there — and there are many of us — who are concerned about the economic shape of this province, they should understand that we are still running a deficit this year when we didn't have to. People should understand that we are borrowing money, \$5.5 billion, for our tax cut, and as a result, we're running a deficit this year.

Did you know, Mr Speaker, that the credit rating agencies, those international agencies that tell us something about the risk associated with lending money to our province, are now giving us the same credit rating today, May 6, 1998, as during the Bob Rae years? You know why that is, Mr Speaker? They all offer the same reason: because this government is doing something that doesn't make any financial sense. They're giving a tax cut before they balance the books.

Anybody who has any head for business, for economics, knows that's a serious mistake. First you balance the books and then you can talk about what to do with the surplus.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Brampton North.

Mr McGuinty: I'm delighted to see that I've aroused the interest of some of the members opposite. With any luck, perhaps they'll be taking a few notes and bringing this kind of debate into their caucus.

One of the things this budget makes clear is that Mike Harris knows the cost of everything and the value of nothing. Let me give you just one example.

Experts everywhere agree that every dollar we spend up front helping a child get off to a good start saves \$7 down the line. Last month, Mike Harris eliminated the food allowance for Ontario's poorest expectant mothers, money that was used to buy fresh fruit, vegetables and vitamins. He said that expectant mothers who are poor are different from others. Apparently they do not and will not have the best interests of their child at heart. What they were going to do with this money is spend it on beer.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): That's what the Premier said.

Mr McGuinty: That's what the Premier said. Not only does he not understand anything about motherhood; he also does not understand that every time a low-birthweight baby is born here in Ontario, medical costs can easily — easily — attain the price of \$100,000, additional health care costs. In addition, that baby develops in such a way that he or she is more likely to have lifelong learning problems, to drop out of school, to end up on social assistance and, in worst cases, end up getting into trouble with the law.

What does that mean? That means that if we spend \$37 a month up front during the seven months of the mother's pregnancy when she's entitled to that supplement, we could end up saving \$100,000 in medical costs, and all kinds of heartache and hardship and financial costs that come when a child just isn't equipped to find success in the world.

Let's talk for a moment about what's happening to our universities in Ontario. I can tell you that people who work in our universities, people who believe in the value of universities and in the value of university education, were looking for something in that budget that wasn't there.

They were looking for some sense that the government understood the importance of post-secondary education. They were looking for some kind of understanding, at least, shared by our American cousins to the south. Last year, 48 out of 50 American states increased funding to the publicly funded universities. Why did they do that? They did it because they understand and recognize and believe that if you're going to cut it in this new economy, you've got to invest in brain power; you've got to invest in your people. So the Americans, in 48 states, increased funding to their universities. What did Mike Harris do in Ontario? Cut funding to our universities by 15%.

In addition to that, we find that the debt load for our students has increased. It's skyrocketing. The average student now is graduating with a debt load of \$25,000. When did we suddenly decide in Ontario that public debt

was a bad thing but that huge debts for our graduating students was a good thing? Talk about downloading costs on to the backs of our students, and talk about a duplicitous approach. This government says debt is a bad thing so they're going to do what they can to get rid of their debt, are going to do what they can to keep down their expenses, but what they're doing is downloading on to the backs of Ontario students.

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It's important for Ontarians to understand what we're all about in my party. We represent a new generation of Liberals who understand that reckless cutting is just as dangerous as reckless spending. Unlike Mike Harris and the members of the government, we also understand that borrowing money and cutting health care just to give a tax cut is reckless. We won't spend money we don't have — I want to make that clear — and once the budget's in balance we will keep it in balance. I can also say that we will not raise taxes.

Mike Harris and I have different values — that's perfectly clear — and different priorities. Mike Harris is willing to borrow for a tax cut. I say, no tax cut before we can afford it.

One of the things that people say on an ongoing basis when it comes to this government is, "They tell us that everything they're doing is going to lead to a healthier and stronger economy." What I'm telling them to understand is that over the long term, to sustain a healthy and vibrant economy, what do we need? We need quality health care and we need quality education.

In fact, health care in Ontario is a competitive advantage for our employers. Our employers pay, on average, \$700 per employee when it comes to health care. Do you know what they pay in the States? Somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$4,000 and \$5,000 per employee. It's a competitive advantage for us to maintain high-quality, accessible, publicly funded health care.

Some people say: "Hang on a sec. What if we just had a second tier, a different system, something outside the existing system where Ontario people could go to get health care? Wouldn't that be a good development?" I want employers to understand that if that development was to take place, you can bet your bottom dollar that employee groups would go see the employer and say: "Listen, there is better health care available in that second tier. We want benefits that will enable us to get into that second tier." The business community should understand that there is no long-term saving to be generated by the opening up of a second tier of health care in Ontario.

Mike Harris sees education as an expense; I see it as an investment. Mike Harris sees teachers as obstacles in the way; I see them as absolutely indispensable partners in the delivery of quality education. And when it comes to health care, Mike Harris sees that, really, as a hindrance in the way of government cost reductions. Do you know how I see health care? I see it as an absolutely essential part of what helps to make us a truly caring and compassionate province.

A budget, any budget, isn't just a statement of finances; it's a statement of our values. I'm saying to the people who are watching at home today that our values are your values. We value health care. We value education. We value making sure our kids get a good start in life; we value fiscal responsibility and compassion.

I said earlier that this is a hit-and-run budget. Mike Harris has hit our hospitals, he's hit our schools, and he's done that for three years now. Now he's running for re-election. My advice to the people of this province is, quite simply, don't trust him.

As an election draws closer, Mike Harris is going to make every effort he possibly can to run away from his record and try to make us forget about all those promises he made not to cut. But there have been too many witnesses for him to simply drive away.

What Mike Harris is going to have to understand is something that I understand and something that I know Ontarians understand. That is, quite simply, that it's our hospitals and our schools and our sense of compassion that have made Ontario the greatest province in the most blessed country on the planet.

Something else that I'm confident that Ontarians understand is that there is more than one bottom line in our province. Ontarians finally, perhaps most importantly of all, understand that a government that fails to grasp these things is not worthy of re-election.

I have concluded my remarks. With that, I want to move an amendment to the motion moved by the Minister of Finance on May 5, which I'll read as follows:

That "That this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government" be amended by deleting the words after "That this House" and adding thereto the following:

Recognizing that this hit-and-run budget is designed to distract the people of Ontario from three years of cuts, chaos and a record of broken promises; and

That Mike Harris broke his promise not to close hospitals; and

That Mike Harris broke his promise not to expand casino gambling; and

That Mike Harris has cut \$870 million from hospitals and has fired over 10,000 nurses and front-line workers since taking office; and

That Mike Harris broke his promise that there would be no new user fees in Ontario when he forced seniors and the poor to pay an additional \$225 million in new user fees for prescription medication; and

That the Mike Harris government has delisted over \$170 million annually in OHIP services; and

That the Mike Harris government has left 17,901 patients on waiting lists for long-term-care beds in Ontario; and

That the Mike Harris government cut \$533 million from classrooms and plans to cut an additional \$900 million from our schools through his new funding formula; and

That 22 school boards have cut junior kindergarten, 53 boards have cut special education and 21 school boards have cut adult education; and

That Mike Harris has raised tuition fees by 60% and has deregulated tuition fees for graduate, professional and some college programs; and

That Mike Harris has cut \$65 million from child care; and

That Mike Harris has failed to implement the recommendations of the coroners' juries to prevent further cases of child abuse and death; and

That Mike Harris has cut \$50.4 million to services for developmentally disabled children and adults, \$8 million to children's mental health services and reduced access to dental services for children; and

That Mike Harris has failed to listen to the public's concerns over deteriorating patient care; and

That after all this, Mike Harris has failed to balance the budget because of his irresponsible tax cut; and

That Mike Harris has proved that he simply cannot be trusted to protect our health care, to improve our education or to take the steps necessary to make sure our children get off to the best start in life;

Therefore, this House has lost confidence in this government.

The Acting Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition has moved the following:

That "That this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government" be amended by deleting the words after "That this House" and adding thereto the following — dispense?

Interjection: No.

The Acting Speaker: Recognizing that this hit-and-run budget —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: I've already asked if it was dispensed, and the answer is no.

Recognizing that this hit-and-run budget is designed to distract the people of Ontario from three years of cuts, chaos and a record of broken promises; and

That Mike Harris broke his promise not to close hospitals; and

That Mike Harris broke his promise not to expand casino gambling; and

That Mike Harris has cut \$870 million from hospitals and has fired over 10,000 nurses and front-line workers since taking office; and

That Mike Harris broke his promise that there would be no new user fees in Ontario when he forced seniors and the poor to pay an additional \$225 million in new user fees for prescription medication; and

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That Mike Harris has failed to listen to the public's concerns over deteriorating patient care; and

That after all this, Mike Harris has failed to balance the budget because of his irresponsible tax cut; and

That as Mike Harris has proved that he simply cannot be trusted to protect our health care, to improve our education and to take the steps necessary to make sure our children get off to the best start in life;

Therefore, this House has lost confidence in this government.

Further debate?

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Mr Sampson: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 6:30 tonight.

The House adjourned at 1623.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell

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of Ontario**

Second Session, 36th Parliament

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Deuxième session, 36^e législature

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Wednesday 6 May 1998

Mercredi 6 mai 1998



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L'honorable Chris Stockwell

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 6 May 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 6 mai 1998

The House met at 1828.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PARTNERSHIPS STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES SOCIÉTÉS EN NOM COLLECTIF

Mr Tsubouchi moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 6, An Act to amend the law with respect to Partnerships / *Projet de loi 6, Loi visant à modifier des lois en ce qui concerne les sociétés en nom collectif.*

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): Madam Speaker, I'd like to share my time with the members for Northumberland and Dufferin-Peel.

I'm pleased to present for second reading the Partnerships Statute Law Amendment Act. This bill will affect the Partnerships Act, the Business Names Act and the Chartered Accountants Act, 1956.

This bill will allow limited liability partnerships to be formed to protect non-negligent partners from personal liability for another partner's professional negligence. Currently in Ontario, in cases where a partnership has been sued and found negligent, all partners face the risk of losing personal assets like their family home if there's a shortfall in the company's liability insurance coverage.

We felt it was unfair for a partner to have his personal assets threatened because of negligent work undertaken by another partner, quite possibly a partner not in the same office or even in the same city. I should point out, however, that these changes apply only to liability arising from professional negligence and do not extend to damages caused by a partner's fraudulent actions.

Before our government took office, we made a commitment to support this initiative that would modernize outdated business laws. I am pleased to say that Ontario will be the first jurisdiction in Canada to recognize these partnerships. The changes represent a modern and more flexible legislative framework, which better reflects the role of the auditor in today's marketplace.

After extensive consultation with the business community, we believe this is a win-win situation — it's simple and fair to all. Negligent partners remain personally liable

in the case of negligence. However, non-negligent partners will be protected and accounting clients will continue to receive high-quality auditing work from LLP organizations.

These partnerships will be required to provide accurate professional services. Standards of accountability and duty of care related to auditing will remain very high since successful plaintiffs will continue to have recourse to the firm's and negligent partner's assets and insurance.

Mandatory insurance provisions, which will be set by the governing association, will ensure successful plaintiffs have access to a minimum level of funds. Beyond that, many LLPs will obtain additional insurance.

Finally, we are ensuring that the public is well informed of the proposed changes. The Institute of Chartered Accountants will be working with firms interested in becoming limited liability partnerships to inform their clients of any changes.

In addition, the government intends to communicate to the public through a variety of ways the effect of this proposed legislation, including developing a public awareness program with the industry and posting LLP-related information on our Web site.

This government is taking a careful, measured approach to LLPs. For that reason, only chartered accountant firms may practise as LLPs for the time being. However, we will consider LLPs for other professions if their governing bodies can demonstrate a need for this type of organizational structure related to their work while at the same time protecting the interests of the Ontario consumer.

I believe it is crucial that we continue to improve overall business-to-government relationships by developing business improvement initiatives with our clients and ensure more efficient government service delivery to businesses in Ontario. I urge all members to support these changes.

Before I end, I would like to convey that we do have a number of areas of support which the Institute of Chartered Accountants has obtained, letters of support from such people as the Leader of the Opposition, Dalton McGuinty; Mr Crozier on the opposition benches; the then whip of the NDP government, David Cooke, who indicated at the time that when they were the government this was supported by them and they wish us to continue our work. There have been many talks with the leader of the third party, Howard Hampton, as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Further debate?

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): It's a privilege for me to be able to rise and speak on this particular bill, because as we address the issue of liability it certainly comes very close to home. I've been very concerned about some of the frivolous charges of liability that we've seen in the past, both as have been charged against some of the volunteers, which really has affected our volunteers in our society, and also as we look at this particular partnership one. Certainly some of the court decisions have been less than desirable, in my humble opinion. There would appear to be an unfairness in the past with both volunteers and partnerships.

I speak from experience when I talk about partnerships. For my first two years after graduation as a veterinarian I practised in Seaforth up in Huron county. I'm sure the member for Huron would be very pleased to hear that. I practised with Turnbull and Bryans, who were in partnership at that time. Following that, I spent two years in Napanee practising in partnership with Dr Myron Mills, and after that four years in partnership with Dr Ron Wilson.

All of those years were exceptional years. I enjoyed them tremendously. But the thing I found extremely upsetting was that when I applied for malpractice insurance, as was recommended, and the premium came, I found that it was significantly more than simply two times what it would cost for a single veterinarian to practise. Of course I was rather concerned, expecting it would be a discount for two. I phoned the insurance company to find out why on earth there would be such a significant difference, and they explained to me that at that time, as this bill is explaining, I was responsible for the liability of myself as well as my partner. Similarly, my partner was responsible for his liability as well as any negligence or malpractice that I might carry out. Consequently, it was almost three times the cost of a single practitioner, and certainly chartered accountants are experiencing the same kind of thing.

Most of our professional groups, if not all of our professional groups, are prohibited by their respective acts from being able to incorporate their practices, although some professions will go to the extent of incorporating their property, their buildings and then leasing back their professional partnership to that corporation. As you're aware, I'm sure, Madam Speaker, with corporations and other groups who can form partnerships and go into a corporation there is automatically a limited liability, because all you can sue for is the value of that particular corporation. So we are left with professional partnerships that have higher risks than other organizations, higher liabilities than other organizations, and they have to pay a higher cost for liability insurance.

I know you don't like to look to the south, but nevertheless, that's where we see a lot of the liability problems, and in the US almost every state has some sort of, or allows, a limited liability partnership. Over there, it recognizes the benefits and the need for this particular bit of legislation.

What is a limited liability partnership? This is a new type of legal entity; it protects one partner from the liabil-

ity of a negligent act of their partner. In other words, the non-negligent partner would not have to end up paying for the other partner or would not necessarily be in the position where they could be sued. That, I think, is tremendously important in this particular bill.

However, I do want to stress that there is protection for the public, because it is the same as if that individual was in practice on their own. They would be responsible for that negligence or that malpractice. Also, there would be, for both partners, the protection for fraud or breach of contract, and in that case both partners would be responsible for that. So by doing this, there is a strong incentive for both partners to monitor each other to make sure that work is properly carried out.

Chartered accountants, traditionally, have carried liability insurance, first, if they could obtain it and, second, if they could afford it. But if they didn't have any insurance to cover it, then their personal assets would certainly be in jeopardy. This bill is all about fairness. It's about clearing the path to promote business. It's about reducing barriers for business. There's no question that red tape in this country is strangling small business. Small business and entrepreneurs across Ontario have been strangled with red tape and with taxes, and legislation such as we're trying to bring in will help clear up this awkwardness for partners, particularly in the chartered accountant business.

It certainly calls for a new approach, as we're looking at the whole area of helping businesses. I go across my riding, whether it be Brighton, Campbellford, Colborne, Port Hope, Cobourg, they're telling us to hold the course, they're telling us to help small business by reducing taxes — reduce red tape, reduce the paper work, get government out of their face. That's what this government certainly has been doing.

This bill will help. Partnerships add a lot to entrepreneurship. There's the flexibility; there's that added ability to specialize and work together. This bill will be a new tool for the chartered accountants and for other professions down the road if they want to ask the government to recognize their particular profession. There will of course have to be legislation to recognize their particular act.

This is an excellent example of government listening. Certainly, the opposition call everyone that we address or that comes to us special interest groups and say that we don't listen to them. This is an example of a very narrow interest group that indeed we have listened to. I think the opposition often equate listening to caving in to every whim and demand that might come along. That is what had been going on with the previous two governments. They would try and satisfy and look after every group that came along, and back and forth, and weave here and there. Even Bob Rae made the comment, "It doesn't matter how much you give, you can never ever give enough to some special interest groups."

1840

I would suggest that this government has been one of the most consultative governments this province has ever experienced. Starting back in 1991 the party toured the

province, consulting with every group it could possibly find, and from that information designed the Common Sense Revolution, our platform. We extensively consulted on the throne speech and on the budget. It was probably the most extensive consultation that was ever carried out for a throne speech. We have spent more time debating each and every bill that has gone through this House. We have spent more time on committee hearings per bill than any other government ever has. The Who Does What exercise: AMO came to us later on and said, "We want these changes." We agreed to every change they came to us with, except leaving 5% for the local school boards to bill property tax owners.

On reg reform, which I was particularly involved with, with the Minister of Environment and Energy, we did extensive consultation. Madam Speaker, you as a critic for the Ministry of Environment will recall the extensive consultation and how we worked it around to make sure we had the best possible regulations coming out. We were on the road with three different draft bills prior to first reading, something other governments have never carried out. Bill after bill we've recognized through consultation, and we have made amendments to those bills.

We are carefully listening and carefully consulting and responding to good advice that we receive, and this has been good advice. I would encourage that other professions look favourably in this direction, and look to doing something about their partnerships. I'll certainly be speaking to members of my profession, and possibly that will be coming down the road.

The Honourable David Tsubouchi, the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, made reference to the support that we have from all three parties, so I look forward, Madam Speaker, to unanimous support on this particular bill, particularly when all three parties agreed to it back in the spring of 1995, including the party that you represent here in the House.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak on this particular bill, and I look forward to unanimous support when we get around to the vote.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I wish to make a few comments in support of Bill 6, which is actually an act to amend several pieces of legislation: the Partnerships Act, the Business Names Act and the Chartered Accountants Act, 1956.

This legislation is somewhat new in this country. In fact, I think Ontario will be the first Canadian jurisdiction which will have a limited liability partnership statute, although most American jurisdictions have passed such legislation in the past.

The purpose of this legislation is enabling in that it allows professional groups, in this particular case the chartered accountants, to amend their governing legislation to allow them to form limited liability partnerships, which is a new form of legal entity. In the future, presumably these other professional organizations, whether it be the veterinarians, as my friend Dr Galt referred to, the law society or the various health professions, could pro-

pose similar legislation as is being put forward by the Chartered Accountants Act with respect to this legislation.

In a general partnership, the partners are liable for all the partnership's debts and liabilities. In contrast, the partners of a limited liability partnership are not personally liable for the negligent acts of another partner or an employee who is directly supervised by another partner. The limited liability partnership, however, will continue to be liable for the negligence of its partners and its employees. So the only liability that is limited in a limited liability partnership is the liability of the non-negligent partners for the negligent acts of other partners. All partners continue to remain liable under contracts entered into by the firm or the partnership and for any damages caused by fraud of one or more partners.

The removal of the liability for negligence of fellow partners will not, in our belief, make chartered accountants, in this particular piece of legislation, any less careful, which I'm sure is the concern of some people in this House. It is clear that the assets of any partner who acted negligently for that particular act will continue to be available to the successful plaintiffs for the payment of damages; and of course the remaining partners will continue to have strong incentives to monitor each other's work in the desire to preserve the partnership's reputation and assets.

It appears that chartered accounting partnerships are faced with a liability and insurance crisis, as are many professional organizations in this province. I know in the legal profession it's somewhere around \$10,000, \$11,000, \$12,000 a year for insurance premiums, which makes it more and more difficult for professional groups to do business. The international insurance market does not, with respect to chartered accountants, permit sufficient coverage with respect to large potential liability associated with auditing financial institutions and other public companies. For this reason, Bill 6 is amending the Chartered Accountants Act, 1956, to permit these firms to form or to continue as limited liability partnerships.

The likelihood of a person being unable to recover fully against a chartered accounting limited liability partnership is very slim. Potential plaintiffs will continue to be protected by the high levels of insurance coverage of the firm's assets, including accounts receivable, leases, furniture, everything else that the partnership owns and the personal assets of any partner who proves to have negligently caused damage to the plaintiff.

This is another piece of legislation that our government is putting forward which we believe will protect these professional institutions. This particular bill, as I indicated, only applies to the chartered accountants, but there have been indications that such groups as the law society may be interested in amending their legislation. Nothing in the bill restricts the option, for example, of lawyers becoming limited liability partners through an amendment to this governing legislation. The Ministry of the Attorney General, we believe, is currently considering a proposal in the context of other amendments to the Law Society Act,

although that isn't before us with this legislation. It no doubt will be considered by other professional groups.

At this point, professions that have a governing body that can determine the need and oversee the process are the means of testing the limited liability partnerships and the government wants to take a careful, measured approach to this form of business structure.

I would submit that our government is moving cautiously. There is obviously an insurance problem. There is a problem with some of these professions with respect to their insurance. This is a solution to that problem. We believe we're proceeding in a prudent way. I encourage all members of the House to support this legislation.

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The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I would certainly like to comment on the fact that our party agrees with the general sentiments across the way on this bill. We think it's a very necessary step for this government to take. It's a step that essentially makes eminent sense, considering the pressures of insurance and liability with which a partner may be faced.

We certainly don't agree with the member for Northumberland, who said, "This is all about a government that is now totally listening." If this government were really listening, it would be listening to the towns and cities across this province that are desperately asking for this government to take some steps on road safety. This government stubbornly refuses to allow red-light cameras at high-collision intersections. If this government was really listening, they would allow the cities that are having these red-light runners who are running red lights in epidemic fashion at least to try these pilot projects of red-light cameras, which are working all over the world, from Australia to Arizona to England to New York City. But this government only listens to certain things; it's very selective.

As I said, our party believes this bill is necessary, it's functional. We certainly agree that in the long run, if it's not done, it could possibly increase costs for the consumer. As you know, as insurance costs go up, as there's more litigation, the consumer who needs the services of chartered accountants could possibly be harmed by higher costs for their services. We see it as a necessary step, and something that we are happy to support in this House.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I'm pleased to respond to the speakers from the government tonight and to indicate general support in principle from the caucus of the New Democratic Party for this bill. Although it's a new evolution in the Canadian jurisdiction, it's a long time coming to understand that there are groups that are not incorporated, businesses that do require some kind of limitation on liability, and this act purports to do that in partnerships.

There are always issues raised around consumer protection when this kind of issue is brought forward, issues that I am quite confident, from my experience over the years in relationship to chartered accountants, that the profession is very able to answer. We will benefit from

having a very short review of this legislation in a committee situation, where any of those issues have an opportunity to be explored, to be explained and to be put to rest, and we can ensure, as we embark upon what I think is very important legislation, that we do it correctly in the province of Ontario, and that it sets a precedent and a hallmark for other jurisdictions to look to in the Canadian family of provinces.

It's important for me to say personally to the chartered accountant community that our desire to have that kind of a review and to ensure that the legislation is done quickly comes much more from our experience with the way in which legislation has been drafted in previous sessions of this Parliament and the way in which mistakes have been made, and to ensure that all voices are heard. It is not with any intent to try to delay the legislation. We will facilitate moving quickly on this.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any further questions and comments? Minister, you may sum up.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Really, this is about trying to provide some fairness, some balance, and at the same time working with some of the business community in our province, and also protecting consumer interests at the same time.

I would like to thank my colleagues from Northumberland and Dufferin-Peel for their comments, and also the members for Oakwood and Beaches-Woodbine for their comments and support of the bill.

There is much to this in terms of making sure we protect the consumer. Part of this is to ensure there are proper levels of insurance in place. Part of it is also about disclosing to the general public through advertising, through the indications on letterheads, designations of the firms, but also with retainers, so people clearly know they'll be dealing with limited liability partnerships.

I would like to thank the Institute of Chartered Accountants for its cooperation and willingness to work with our government and the other parties to come up with a fair scheme for the consumer in which the proper disclosures are made and the proper protection is in place for the consumer as well.

This is a fairly simple bill. It is about four and a half pages in length, including the French translation. It's very straightforward. I think we have tried to address the needed things. It's part of our government's mandate to try to work with the business community to ensure that we work for job growth, that we work to protect jobs in this province.

Certainly I wouldn't characterize this as red tape, but much of what we have done through the red tape bills we have passed through our government really speaks to taking obstacles from business that have become outdated and that have lost their reason for even existing. Much leads to the discussion on this bill because we're looking to modernize this area.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Colle: As I said in my brief two-minuter, in principle we think this is a necessary bill and it's something the government needs to do. We certainly are in agreement in

presenting this bill and we will support it. We have some comments to make. Hopefully we can clarify the contents of this bill for the public also, because some bills may seem to be very minor in nature but in the long run it's how they affect the public and the consumer at large.

Before I get into the bill itself, I want to commend my colleague from Essex South. I should mention I'd like to share time with him and with my colleague from Downsview on this Bill 6. Could I have consent, Chair? Okay.

My colleague from Essex South, who is a CGA himself, has been doing a lot of the grass-roots work behind this bill for the last couple of years in trying to find out whether the bill was necessary, whether the bill was required. I've talked to him on numerous occasions about it, for he was the previous Liberal consumer affairs critic. Although this pertains to CAs, he thought this was a good bill and a necessary bill and something that would certainly enhance the work of CAs and their ability to deliver their service across Ontario in a more affordable, efficient and effective way.

Again I would like to thank the member for Essex South for his work and guidance in that area. I think it has really helped in terms of bringing this bill here today.

I would like to mention too just in passing that one of the members, and I know it wasn't a malicious comment, basically said, "This is a very narrow interest group." As you know, this government sometimes tends to put people into pigeonholes as being narrow interest groups.

I don't think the CAs need our protection from being called a narrow interest group, but they're like all kinds of groups, small and large, in this province that need advocacy and that need help from government. Whether it's the CA association or whether it's the carpenters' union or whether it's mothers on disability allowance, they all need advocacy from government. They come to government for that reason. I don't think it's, you might say, proper for a government to categorize everybody as very narrow interest groups.

From a personal perspective, my contact with CAs is from an annual program that we do for the elderly in my riding who earn I think under \$16,000 a year. What the CAs have offered to do without my asking, and I think they offered to all members, is that volunteers with full CA credentials will come into your riding. For the last two or three years they have come into my riding night after night during income tax time, and they've done the income tax forms for elderly seniors who couldn't afford to pay or whom to be done.

I've talked to these volunteers personally and they're really, in some ways, no different from any other group of people in society who are trying to make a living. Those are the ones I've met who are doing income taxes for people late at night at St Hilda's Towers in my riding, or were doing it at the Doug Saunders building, which is a Metro co-op building. They would come in every night and with great, I'd say, kindness go through the income tax of people who didn't have English as a first language. They did that without any kind of prompting. They did it

willingly. That's been my contact with the so-called very narrow interest group.

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Like any other group in society, they are in our communities. We all know CAs, and sometimes they get a bad reputation as being too bookish or whatever, but in this case my contact with them as an organization has been a very positive one in terms of volunteering to help seniors who might get ripped off if they go to the corner travel agent or wherever to get their income tax done and be charged \$100 or \$200 for a very perfunctory income tax form. I just wanted to put that on the record. Not to say that the CAs of this province need my defence, but there's no need to categorize everybody in this province and put them into pigeonholes. It doesn't help any of us if we do that, because life isn't that simple.

In terms of this bill itself, if you look at the impact on consumers, one of the most interesting aspects of it that I found was that one of the things that's happening in our society now, in our world of commerce, is that a lot of new cutting-edge businesses are coming on board with a lot of potential for litigation because they deal with, let's say, venture capital, they deal with new growth areas in high tech, so-called, and other businesses whose main assets are intellectual capital rather than real, tangible capital. It sometimes becomes a very tenuous area for a CA to get into, without being concerned about what happens if there's litigation as a result of representing this new cutting-edge firm that deals with, as I mentioned before, intellectual capital.

What this bill can possibly do is limit some of the risk factor. By limiting the risk, it can possibly lower the potential for higher insurance rates. If you look at the US example, there's been an epidemic of litigation that has not only hurt the CA profession in the United States but also the medical profession, the legal profession, the architectural profession. I think the CAs are responding to the direct pressure that has been put upon their associates in the United States, where there has been a heightened level of litigation.

That, in the long run, not only hurts the CAs but hurts the customers they are serving, and in turn it means higher costs for the consumers of this province who need the services, who buy the products of the companies they represent and are providing the service for. This is one link to Bill 6 which seems to be fairly remote and distant from the ordinary consumer, but it gives the consumer possible protection against higher prices.

It means too that you'll have a greater availability, a variety of CAs to go to since the partnership situation allows more people to stay in business, therefore there's more variety, more choice for the consumer. If this bill isn't put into place, what happens is that one of the partners who isn't directly involved with the service being provided could possibly lose his or her home, car, cottage and personal assets. That is frightening to anybody, considering what can happen in a litigated matter before the courts. By the time you get through the court proceedings

a year or two later, you lose your home, your boat, your car and the shirt off your back even if you win.

This tries at least to give some protection to a partner who may not be protected as it stands right now. I think that's a fair and just thing to do. I'd like to remind the public that this doesn't mean that the firm isn't liable; the firm is still liable. Therefore, if you have a problem with the contract provisions, the so-called provisions you had anticipated from the CA firm, you can still go the litigation route. In my understanding of the bill it's quite clear that it still permits this, therefore you have recourse despite the fact that there are limitations on that partner, who may not be involved, to have some protection in terms of the personal wealth and assets they may have accumulated within the family over a lifetime. I don't think any of us here would want to see, whether it be a CA or whether it be a doctor or lawyer, lose their personal assets through this process when they're not directly involved in the case themselves.

It's also interesting that in the United States, in looking at this type of legislation, 51 states now have it. I think all the states are now doing it. Therefore, it's something that there is a template for, that there is a benchmark for. They're doing it in the United States, so it's nothing that revolutionary, although in Canada, if I'm not mistaken, we're going to be the first jurisdiction — the minister can correct me on that later — that is going to attempt to this. Perhaps this may be a forerunner of typical legislation that we introduce, maybe for CGAs, perhaps for lawyers, for instance, but this doesn't preclude that from happening down the road. This deals specifically with CAs and their limited liability.

I should mention that there's no real tax implication here. It doesn't give CAs a tax advantage. There's no real cost, I think, directly to government, from our look at the bill, in terms of increased perhaps supervision, monitoring. I don't think so. There doesn't seem to be a deterrent in terms of what this bill is going to cost the taxpayer. In the long run it probably will save the taxpayer some money, all the other variables being controlled, because it'll cut down the cost of litigation and it will cut down perhaps the cost of insurance, which all professionals now have to get.

We hear the horror stories of doctors, especially in the United States, where they have to pay premiums of \$1 million, \$2 million, to practise medicine. We in Canada don't want to see that type of litigation frenzy come here because in the long run it means higher fees. Whether it be for accountancy services or medical services, I think as Canadians and Ontarians we don't want to see the spread of that type of litigation mania in Canada. It's something that will again drive up prices for all Ontarians and it's something we've tried to stop from coming into Ontario.

In terms of the government's attitude, I think in this case here they've looked at it and they see that it's a necessary step. I've commended them for listening too. I know they've talked in the past with our former leader Lyn McLeod, who supported it, and our present leader does, so we think the government is doing something that is required here.

We have no qualms about that. We hope this proves to be a good case study to see if this can be replicated. I hope the minister, who is here tonight, will monitor the situation so that if there are other requests similar in nature, perhaps we can use this template to go on and improve and protect consumers and professionals who are always, considering the cost of doing business today, under that kind of threat.

That is what we think is good about the bill. We certainly don't think this lets the government off the hook; I know the member for Northumberland was saying that it proves again that the government is listening, that the government is perfect. As he's proud to say, the business of Ontario is business. I think the business of Ontario is people. That's how we try to judge things: How does this help people? We think this is good for business but it's also good for people, the consumer, the ordinary person.

That's why I hope the government will also listen more to people from the other side, and as I mentioned earlier, what I'm very concerned about is that this government refuses to listen to the police officers across this province, the mayors, the councils, who are asking for red-light cameras at high-collision intersections. There are thousands of motorists who are running red lights and who are doing it without any kind of second thought, and this is a government that calls itself a law-and-order government. I wish they would think of listening more across the board.

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In terms of liability, if there was an accident at a high-collision intersection where someone ran a red light, I'm just wondering whether someone wouldn't or shouldn't sue the Premier of this province, Mike Harris, if they get hit by a motorist who runs a red light. I wonder what the liability is there for this government when the evidence is clear that they should act in this area as they have acted on Bill 6. They have heard from, as I said, police officers from all over the world, safety experts, the international insurance association, and they're all saying red-light cameras save lives, prevent injuries. This government says: "We don't care. We don't want red-light cameras. We're right. We're not going to listen."

I wish that they would follow the lead of the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Affairs here in Bill 6, that the Minister of Transportation would also listen to the public who want protection. That's what this bill is about. It's about a little bit of protection. It's about taking care of a problem out there, and that's what government is for. Governments are to take care of — whether it be business or people — needs; not all needs, but they have a role to play. This government here has intervened in the marketplace to do something positive, and there's nothing wrong with that.

I know the neo-cons and the Reform types over there may not like that, but the small-c conservatives, the old Davis Tory types over there, know there's a place for good government. Don't be ashamed to stick your nose where you have to stick it to help people. Don't listen to neo-cons all the time who say: "Red-light cameras are against our ideology. We don't want them. We don't want

to listen to the member for Chatham-Kent about his school bus bill because it's against our ideology." Put your ideology aside, as you have done here, and help people. That's what the people of Ontario are saying, whether it be the CAs, whether it be the police association, whether it be nurses. Put your ideological baggage aside and look at things objectively and do what is right and what is good, efficient and fair.

This Bill 6 is a fair piece of legislation. We're supporting it. That's why we're asking you to open up and listen to other Ontarians who also want you to do things that help Ontarians, large, small, in between, and not just to always look through your ideological glasses at things. Take your ideological lenses off and look at things for what they are. Ontarians don't want radical ideology from either the extreme right or left; they want a middle-of-the-road approach, and this Bill 6 is a moderate approach. You don't see people marching in front of Queen's Park saying, "Stop Bill 6." People are saying, "It seems to be a rational bill, a good, decent bill that helps people." That's all they're saying, and that's why they're not marching on Queen's Park today, because this is a reasonable bill.

I hope you support this bill. We know we will. I hope you also will support the introduction of lifesaving red-light cameras at high-collision intersections that are killing people all across the province. We need you to act on helping to save lives, and in our hospitals too. Don't close those 35 hospitals. Listen to people. Don't close the six emergency departments in Toronto. That's also something you should be listening to.

Those are my comments. It's a good little bill that does what it should do, and we're supporting it.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I'm pleased to rise this evening to say a few words on Bill 6, notwithstanding the fact that we need some emergency repairs to dikes on Pelee Island. I'll leave that for another night. I am reminded, though, that the member for Northumberland was talking about listening and he was saying about how they have gone along all the roads in Ontario. He and I had a discussion the other night where the problem is that, going over all the roads in Ontario, with the downloading it's difficult to find a provincial highway, because they all belong to the counties now. But we'll leave that for another night as well.

The member for Oakwood did make mention that I have, as the previous consumer and commercial relations critic, been following the bill as well as this particular subject for some time. I don't mind saying that it was back in April 1996 that I first wrote to the minister — at that time Minister Sterling — to indicate that we certainly would support legislation in this area that would cover the matter of limited liability partnerships.

I too am appreciative that at any juncture leading up to this bill, both Minister Sterling and Minister Tsubouchi have been helpful, as well as Dave Wilson of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario. I mention that because we don't get to the point of second reading debate on these bills without having had some information along

the way, both from ministries and from those who are interested in the success of the bill.

Others have mentioned the different aspects of the bill they favour. I think the one I appreciate the most is its fairness. It's what's fair. We have limited companies. Obviously many of us are familiar with what those are. Some of the public may not always have an intricate knowledge of what limited companies are, but certainly those of us who are discussing the bill understand why it's necessary to limit liability and what the rationale is behind limiting liability. There are simply good reasons why we should do that.

This bill, in its explanatory notes, points out that it "provides for the formation of a new type of legal entity, a limited liability partnership." We're aware that "in general partnerships, the partners are liable for all of the partnership's debts and liabilities. By contrast, the partners in a limited liability partnership are not personally liable for the negligent acts of another partner or an employee who is directly supervised by another partner. However, the partnership continues to be liable for the negligence of its partners and employees."

What it really says, in a nutshell, to those who may be watching at home and may be interested, is that if you're a partner in a limited liability partnership and a partner is negligent, you won't lose your home, your personal belongings, your automobile. You are liable to have those assets of the partnership that you own at risk and, rightly, that should be. The partnership certainly should be liable. But I don't think anybody of reason wants to take away anybody's home and personal belongings unless that person can be held personally liable. Frankly, that's what it's all about.

It was mentioned earlier that this bill has support from all three parties, and I'm pleased to say that it's my understanding that it does. There are few things in this Legislature where we get unanimous agreement. Personally, I think that's unfortunate, but in a case like this, where we can get all three parties in the House agreeing to the relative merits of the bill, even at this stage of this government, it's certainly refreshing that something like this comes along from time to time.

It was mentioned earlier that the primary concern we should have is the public. We want to protect the public, and I've not known any of the chartered accountants, the certified general accountants or any of the other known accounting designations, the certified management accountants — all of them have the public's interests as paramount.

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This bill will do nothing to take away from that. In fact, it may even enhance that because, as has been mentioned, liability insurance is difficult if not impossible to obtain under some circumstances, and with the introduction of this bill I believe that will be made easier and chartered accountant firms may now be able to do work in a field that at another time, because of its risk, they may simply have refused. Under this, in the interests of the public, a

chartered accountant firm can take on that responsibility and in its own way protect the public.

I dare not repeat anything that's said before, except the fact that I'll be speaking to Minister Leach about some aid for Pelee Island's dikes, I will leave you and the others of my colleagues in the House to say that I look forward to this bill receiving its debate this evening, going on to its next step, and being passed in the near future with all our agreement.

Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview): I'm very pleased to support this bill and I'll be brief and to the point. There are three reasons for supporting this bill, ladies and gentlemen. The first is that this is really is an issue of fundamental justice; the second is, quite simply, it's important for competitiveness of the profession of accountancy; and, third, it shows real common sense. The real question is why it took so long to get here.

Dealing first with the background of this legislation, it's a very short piece of legislation which creates a new legal entity, a limited liability partnership, which, as you know, simply states that partners are not personally liable for the negligent acts of another partner or employee supervised by another partner. However, it does not mean that the partnership is not liable for the negligence of its partners and employees. By contrast, in a general partnership all of the partners are liable for all of the partnership's debts and liabilities.

This is, as I indicated first off, an issue of fundamental justice. Picture yourself in a situation where you, through no fault of your own, are sued for the wrongdoings of another. That is the kind of situation that one is seeking to resolve through Bill 6, the legislation creating a limited liability partnership. There's no question that someone who has been found guilty of negligence, of inappropriate action, should be liable for the consequences of that action, but there is no rhyme or reason, nor would you expect it in other areas of your life, why someone who is totally innocent of the wrongdoing would be held liable for the wrongdoings of another.

That's what we're trying to do here. We're simply trying to protect the innocent partner from the consequences of the actions and the wrongdoing of another partner with whom he may have had no dealings at all with respect to the action at hand. This is in essence what the legislation is seeking to redress and it is a welcome piece of legislation and one that will be watched carefully because, as we know, the chartered accountants are the first to ask for this kind of protection, for this kind of legislation. It is not legislation that exists anywhere else in Canada and it will allow Ontario to pioneer a very worthwhile endeavour which I'm sure will be watched and monitored. I urge the minister to pay close attention to this legislation and how it is implemented and what its consequences are.

The second reason that I think this ought to be supported wholeheartedly is because of the issue of competitiveness. This is a government that talks a great deal about how important it is to be competitive. They don't always succeed, but they're very good at the rhetoric. This is an area where the government can put its money where its

mouth is. Although it has taken its money out of a lot of other people's mouths, nevertheless this is an area in which they can do something constructive.

I point out that there are 35 states that have similar legislation. The profession has rightly pointed out that, in order to be competitive in that market, to be able to be at the same level as the best, they need legislation that will give them the same advantages as their neighbours to the south.

What are the consequences of not enacting legislation of this nature? I would just like to read to you some of the comments that have been made about the seriousness of the consequences for Ontario citizens and in particular the business community. These include threatening the availability of audit services by discouraging the best and the brightest people from entering the profession and from becoming partners; limiting services by discouraging practitioners from accepting some engagements such as initial public offerings in the key growth areas of technology and other businesses whose main assets are intellectual capital and other intangibles — exactly the kind of businesses that the Ontario economy needs. Practitioners will also be discouraged from assisting directors in their expanding corporate governance responsibility. Too, there is the issue of increased costs because of insurance and other factors that will be passed on, possibly placing the cost of audit services out of reach of consumers and small businesses.

Clearly, the consequences of not enacting limited liability partnership legislation are simply too serious to ignore. Therefore, it is entirely appropriate that we take this step this evening to consider this legislation, to consider it gravely and to pass it on to the next stage.

The third reason we support this legislation is because, quite frankly, ladies and gentlemen of the government, this is real common sense, and it's about time that we saw some of it in this House. There is an issue here of natural justice, as I've pointed out. We should not penalize innocent individuals for the actions of guilty parties and, therefore, it is absolute common sense to support this legislation. There is the common sense of ensuring that one very vital business in our country remains as competitive as possible.

Ultimately, I think this issue has been studied a great deal. The Institute of Chartered Accountants, as you know, has worked for a very long time to ensure that we understand this legislation, that appropriate proposals are put forward and that there is nothing in this legislation which is outlandish or insensible.

I would simply like to read from a letter from the institute, which is dated October 27, 1997. I will quote a paragraph which shows the nuts of the question for the association.

"LLPs would strengthen the viability of the public accounting professions by permitting public accountants and others who operate within partnerships to protect their personal assets — by limiting their personal liability when they are not the partner involved in a claim. This minimal

protection of uninvolved partners is signalled to the public by the use of the letters 'LLP'...."

I think that statement really summarizes what this is all about. This is about protecting the innocent and it is about ensuring that it is only the guilty that are liable for their actions.

Then we come to the question, why did it take so long? We know for a fact that various leaders of parties have supported this legislation. Leaders of my party have been very supportive. Our former leader, Lyn McLeod, and our current leader, Dalton McGuinty, have taken extraordinary steps to make sure this legislation was considered before the House. In fact my leader, Dalton McGuinty, last December, when the proposed legislation was in danger of being lost, wrote a letter to insist that this is an item that should be heard. Despite those efforts, as you know, the legislation died on the order paper and it is now being reintroduced.

Why would something that is as clear, as concise, as fair, as good for business, as commonsensical, be ignored and take so long to get to this Legislature? I think that is a question that only the government can answer. For my part, let me say that I'm delighted to support this legislation, I'm delighted that the government is finally doing the right thing and I look forward to dealing with this legislation in committee, and ultimately in third reading, and giving it swift passage.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms Frances Lankin): Further debate?

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I want to begin by putting on the record that we, as a caucus in this Legislature, certainly support this bill in principle and want to see it move forward. We want to recognize the very diligent and involved work of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in bringing this forward and recognize the very legitimate reasons that it is before us here today.

My comments will be focused less on the bill, because I believe members before me have spoken adequately and eloquently about what's in the bill. As everybody has said, not a big bill, not a hard bill to really understand, presents very well, and I think that's a testament to the work of the Institute.

However, there is a concern about the process and the abuse of process that we've seen in this place over the last some two and a half years by this government as we've tried to ram things through without the proper process, without due diligence, without the thought that's necessary, and then found ourselves a week or two or a month or six months later having to revisit and make corrections because we didn't honour the process that this place has put in place over a long number of years to make sure that legislation that comes before us that we have the responsibility of doing due diligence of gets the hearing that is called for and in the end is the best that can be presented and put in place so that everybody concerned or affected feels comfortable that it is in their best interests.

That is why we're today, as a party, asking that this piece of legislation be passed tonight at second reading

and moved to committee where those out there who have some interest, some concern, some thought on this who want to bring it to a table that is set for them to come to may have that opportunity. The essence of what we do here in this Legislature is tied very intimately to the possibility of the general public out there coming and being involved and hearing from us what we propose to do, and in turn having a chance to respond and make suggestions, perhaps bring amendments forward that are voted on and that at the end of the day all of us feel comfortable are in the best interests of the people we serve.

In fact, when I speak to negligence where process is concerned in this place, I think to some degree we all stand somewhat tainted. When the Liberals were government, they changed the rules so that they could speed up the process and get legislation they felt very strongly about and wanted to get through in a quicker fashion. When we were government we did the same thing. We changed the rules so that we could get legislation that we felt was in the best interests of the public through in a more timely fashion, in a quicker fashion. I think at the end of the day any party that does that does the public out there a great disservice, a great injustice. I think over a long number of years in this place people have sat down and put in place processes that are checks and balances.

Any of you who have studied political science or the way that politics works or government works in a jurisdiction such as ours know that checks and balances are absolutely essential in the passing of any legislation to make sure that at the end of the day it does what it suggests it is to do and that is also protects those who may be affected indirectly by some of the consequences of that bill.

In this place people work very hard to develop and bring forward changes to legislation, changes to regulations, changes to the rules that govern all of us when we work together to try and make a living or develop communities or do business. We bring it forward and it's introduced in the House for first reading. Normally that passes without too much comment. Then it's brought before the House by the governing party; it's their call when pieces of legislation are brought to the House.

A good government, in my mind, does that in partnership with the opposition parties and with the House leaders of the opposition parties. They bring it forward for second reading and at second reading there is significant debate on the principle of the bill. At that point, normally there is a vote taken and that bill goes to committee. At committee that could be a very speedy process if there's not a whole lot of take-up by people out there on the call for input or any concern. Committees often move very quickly to clause-by-clause consideration of the bill and then bring it back to the House for third reading and some further less-extenuated debate and then passage of that particular bill.

That's the way this place has operated for a long number of years. On the odd occasion all three parties, usually in a situation of some emergency, bypass those processes and move to a vote on second or third reading on an eve-

ning such as the one we have before us tonight. It is with that process in mind that we have respect for due process and due diligence in looking at pieces of legislation so that when it's all said and done, we have in front of us something that will do what the group that brought it forward expected it would do, and that will protect the interests of others out there who may be directly or indirectly affected, and that's what I'm hoping will happen in this instance.

I have no reason to be, at this point in time, critical of this bill, although today as we did some research — not just today but over the last three or four days since the bill was introduced to the House last week, we've done a bit of talking to some folks. Even though there isn't a great uptake or upheaval or uproar about this, there certainly are some folks out there who want a bit more time to take a look at it, to see how it impacts them and perhaps to come forward and have some discussion with us about this and what we might do to improve it or to make it work for them, perhaps in a different and more positive way.

We have to understand too that this bill is the first of its kind in Canada; so it sets a precedent for every other jurisdiction in the country. I think it behooves us, if for no other reason except that we're the first ones doing it, to do it right and take the time necessary to make sure that we look under all the stones and uncover anything that might be out there that needs to be uncovered and feel comfortable that we've done that. I know I personally would not feel comfortable unless I participated in making sure that that process happened and that we call this House back to take the time necessary to do this, not just in this instance but with all of the bills that they will bring forward. Hopefully, that will be allowed.

We've had some interesting experiences over the last two and a half years with pieces of legislation that have been brought before us here in great haste sometimes not completely thought through. We've found in the middle of it, sometimes in debates, that there were major mistakes, and unfortunately at the end in some very significant instances, we found a week or two, or a month down the road, as the government began to try to implement it, that there were great mistakes in the bill and we had to come back and spend more time changing that.

I'm hoping that the government in its new format, in its new desire to be seen to be listening and to be more attentive to the concerns of citizens and constituents out there, will, with all bills, be willing to take the time necessary to make sure that the process that has been put in place over a long period of time in this place and in this province is honoured and used in the way that it was anticipated by those who did that.

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For example, we change regulations in this province. If you had listened to the government's side, you would think that a lot of the regulations that now exist in Ontario all of a sudden came out of the blue someplace, that somebody in government woke up one night in the middle of the night and had a vision of how things could be better, came into the House and a regulation was made. That's not true. Anybody who knows about the evolution of laws and rules

and regulations in this province knows that in most instances, regulations get put in place when some calamity happens. Somebody gets killed or there's some spill of some sort. A tremendous amount of effort goes into a study when that happens. Then at the end of the day, a regulation is put in place to make sure it doesn't happen again.

I think due diligence was done initially to put in place laws and regulations that govern the way we work together and respect each other and protect each other. I would suggest that the legislation that presently covers institutes such as chartered accountants and other professionals in this province has been developed in just such a fashion. Over the years, people responding to different circumstances have developed legislation that protects the industry itself, the professionals in the industry and the public it serves. There's a very delicate balance that we try to keep in place when we do that.

It behooves us to make sure that when we're changing something that has evolved over a period of time in the way that we are here — I suggest this is a significant change and sets a significant precedent in the province — we do ourselves and the people we serve more justice when we take the time that is necessary. We still haven't heard in any significant way, it seems to me, from groups out there that we often classify as consumers whom this piece of legislation affects. We at least owe the people a chance, the opportunity to hear of this bill in a more fulsome fashion than perhaps they have up to now so that they might respond to that as well, so that we might find a way in the end to balance the various concerns and anxieties that may arise.

I hold up to you for your consideration, by way of example, how groups can come together around challenging circumstances and situations. In this instance, we're looking at a profession that finds itself sometimes threatened with extinction by way of a lawsuit that may be brought, that if it's extended to its fullest extent, might put a company out of business, might do irreparable harm to a very upright and dignified profession that works very hard to do the best it can but finds itself from time to time in a situation where, because of the negligence of a member or even a staff person, has to defend itself and may find itself out of business.

On the one hand, we want to make sure that consumers have the protection of going to the law for recourse if they find themselves unduly dealt with or not dealt with in a fashion that is legal or aboveboard. On the other hand, we need to protect the profession, not unlike what happened a few years ago when industry found itself being challenged in courts of law when a person got hurt on the job, was sued, and by way of that suit found themselves out of business. Government got together with workers and business and worked out a new arrangement called the Workers' Compensation Board that found a way to protect all interests in that instance, and put in place some legislation that protected companies, when somebody got hurt on the job, from being wiped out completely, but also called upon them to provide for folks who got hurt on that

job. We found a win-win. We found a way to protect consumers and workers and we found a way to protect industry.

This government, as you know, has moved very aggressively over the last two and a half years to tilt the balance that we found there very significantly, so that now we find the companies again have the upper hand and workers out there are hollering and shouting but are not being heard. Their rights are being trampled on and they're not getting the kind of protection and compensation they were used to under the system that was put in place over a long number of years by many different kinds of governments, in partnership with industry, to make that happen.

What I'm saying is that in this instance the change is significant enough in this bill to warrant the due process of this place, to warrant the due diligence following the process that this place presents.

On behalf of my caucus, I'm saying tonight that we are going to support this bill in principle, but we're asking in all sincerity and with all due concern that it be sent to committee so that we might have a chance to hear from folks out there who may have some concern, who may have some thoughts for us that might even improve the bill and extend it to other groups — who knows? — but at the end of the day in this place we're all comfortable that we've done the best we can, that we've taken the time necessary to make sure this is a piece of legislation that will not come back in a week or a month or six months to haunt us because we missed something, and that it will serve, in the way that is anticipated, all of the chartered accountants out there who are registered under that institute and those whom they serve by way of the work they do.

Those are my comments for this evening on this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments? Further debate? Minister, would you like to wrap up?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I summed it up very well the last time I spoke, that really this bill is about balance, at the same time trying to protect consumer interests and giving tools to an industry, a profession, that simply will assist them in servicing the public.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Tsubouchi has moved second reading of Bill 6. Is it the pleasure of the House that he motion carry? Carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Madam Speaker, I understand we're referring it to the administration of justice committee.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I indicated to the minister, and I just want to put it on the record as well, that we would be menable — perhaps it's something we could sort out through the House leaders — to see whether, in light of the time lines in the rules about when a bill can get to committee, that can be facilitated so the bill could get to committee as early as next week. That's something we are prepared to pursue with the House leaders tomorrow.

The Acting Speaker: I thank the member for Dovercourt. That's not a point of order but it's useful information and I'm sure the House leaders will take that up.

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FARMING AND FOOD PRODUCTION PROTECTION ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 SUR LA PROTECTION DE L'AGRICULTURE ET DE LA PRODUCTION ALIMENTAIRE

Mr Danford, on behalf of Mr Villeneuve, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 146, An Act to protect Farming and Food Production / Projet de loi 146, Loi protégeant l'agriculture et la production alimentaire.

Mr Harry Danford (Hastings-Peterborough): It's my pleasure to introduce third reading of Bill 146. Farming and food production are absolutely vital to our wellbeing in this province. Not only do these activities literally put the food on our tables, the butter on our bread, but they also annually contribute \$25 billion to Ontario's economy and employ close to 650,000 people, with new job opportunities being created every day.

Protecting our farmers' ability to continue to produce an abundant supply of wholesome, high-quality and affordable food and many other agricultural products benefits each and every individual who makes Ontario home, as well as the countless others in countries that import our agricultural products.

The proposed legislation would ensure that our agriculture and food industries can continue to thrive, by providing our farmers with the necessary assurances that they can conduct their normal business practices without fear of nuisance lawsuits or unnecessarily restrictive bylaws.

I realize that we do have a law that provides some of this protection, but it is limited and it is out of date. Given the changes that have occurred in agriculture and indeed in rural Ontario, the 10-year-old Farm Practices Protection Act is no longer effective. The population mix in rural Ontario has changed dramatically. Non-farmers now account for close to 85% of the total rural population.

Let me add that as a lifelong resident of rural Ontario, I fully understand the attractions that draw people from the city. It is more tranquil, a less rushed life, and there is a real sense of community in rural living. For the most part, neighbours get along and help each other out, and no one can doubt that in light of the tremendous outpouring of support and assistance in the wake of January's devastating ice storm in eastern Ontario.

But just as the streets in Ontario, and that is in the urban centres of Toronto or London or Ottawa, feature businesses and industries, so do the concession roads of Durham, Middlesex and Lanark. The businesses in rural Ontario, however, are changing. New and innovative types of farming are introducing non-traditional crops and livestock to our countryside. Today's normal farming

practices include activities that simply are not covered under the current legislation. More farmers are taking a step beyond production, not only growing the commodities but also adding value right on the farm before they ship those products through the farm gate. Times have changed, farming and food production have changed, but the current act has not changed with them. The proposed legislation recognizes these changes.

Bill 146 would improve upon the current legislation in a number of ways by clarifying what constitutes an agricultural operation and encompassing more businesses. Farmers who raise emu and ostriches, deer and elk, and beekeepers and maple syrup producers, for example, would be added under this new law, spelling out that normal farm practices are those consistent with proper and acceptable customs and standards followed by the industry, adding light, vibration, smoke and flies to the current list of noise, odour and dust as the effects that can be expected from normal modern farming practices, and including activities that farmers may undertake on their farms to add value to their own commodities.

Equally important, the proposed act recognizes and balances the rights of those who conduct their farming businesses in rural Ontario with the rights of those who live in rural Ontario. I can say that with confidence because even before the government was elected, we went out and spoke to both farmers and other rural residents, and they told us that this legislation was one of their key concerns. They said that the level of protection provided was not adequate, that the legislation didn't cover a number of modern farming activities, that there was concern about the increasing conflict over restrictive bylaws. We said then that we would put in place a law that protected the rights of farmers using normal farm practices to continue raising the food products we all use; a law that minimized the need for unnecessary, time-consuming and costly litigation; a law that would ensure Ontario's agri-food sector could continue to grow, thrive and create jobs, now and into the future.

The proposed act, An Act to protect Farming and Food Production, does all that and a great deal more. It adheres to our strong health, safety and environmental standards. The new law would continue to be subject to the provincial Environmental Protection Act, the Pesticides Act, the Health Protection and Promotion Act and the Ontario Water Resources Act. Even if the proposed legislation flew in the face of existing standards, our farmers would not. Of all Ontarians, it is the farmers who best understand that our soil and water resources must be protected, for it is the farmers who rely upon those very resources for their daily livelihood.

Over the last 10 years or so, farmers and farm organizations have made tremendous environmental strides right across this province. For example, since the early 1990s the Ontario Farm Environmental Coalition has been encouraging farmers to conduct their activities in a manner that respects the environment. Dozens of farm organizations and marketing boards are involved in the coalition, including the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the

Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, AGCare and the Ontario Farm Animal Council. All told, the coalition represents tens of thousands of farmers.

Central to its efforts are environmental farm plans. These individual plans set out opportunities for environmental enhancements and provide a strategy for making low-cost, highly effective changes on the farm. In combination with education workshops, technical advice, peer reviews and funding incentives, the plans are helping farmers make environmental improvements in their own operations. It's voluntary, and it's working because farmers care. So far, 12,000 participants have attended environmental farm plan workshops, close to 3,000 of them in just the last 12 months. The coalition, by the way, had set a target of 2,000 participants per year.

Interest is up in the program's incentive grant as well. Eligible farmers claimed more than \$1.8 million from the Agricultural Adaptation Council in the year ending March 31, 1998. Those incentive dollars are truly that: For every dollar in grant money, farmers are spending an additional \$3 on environmental enhancements to their own farming operations. That's close to \$5.5 million in just one year, all to safeguard the environment.

I'm very proud of our farmers, and I'm proud that from the very beginning OMAFRA has been part of the project. Ministry staff have provided technical expertise to develop programs and materials and made their knowledge and support widely available through the local workshops.

When I say I'm proud of the ministry, that's really not a surprise, because the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has long been known as a concerned and active partner in the agricultural and food industries, certainly in rural Ontario. In fact, the proposed plan to protect farming and food production was conceived in partnership with our stakeholders, and that includes all of our stakeholders. Public consultations were carried out across the province by the member for Lambton, Marcel Beaubien, and myself. That's the way we like to do things in our ministry, to ensure that new policy or legislation meets the needs of those it will affect.

The response to these meetings was strong and encouraging. More than 850 people attended the consultations and more than 60 written submissions were received. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, the Rural Ontario Municipal Association and many other commodity groups all contributed tremendously to both the consultation and the actual development of the bill. Many rural residents took the time to voice their concerns and to address the issues as well. Together they all helped immensely in bringing balance to this legislation. That is why the proposed act will provide the added protection to farmers without duplicating other legislation and policies designed to protect the Ontario public.

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The new act would deal constructively with emerging concerns around unduly restrictive municipal bylaws. The ministry, farm groups and municipalities will work together to increase awareness among municipal decision-

makers about modern farming practices so that the future bylaws can be drafted with full recognition of the demands of running a farming operation. This type of leadership and direction addresses any potential conflicts between farmers and municipalities before — and I stress the word “before” — the bylaws are actually drafted.

Another activity that we're preparing to undertake is a public awareness program that will focus on the realities of living in rural Ontario. This too would be accomplished in cooperation with all the stakeholders, the farm and the rural groups together.

We have to do a better job of informing people who move to rural areas that farms are indeed places of business, that sometimes the crop can't wait until after the weekend to be harvested, that at the height of the season greenhouse operators have to run their lights all night. Many farmers already regularly advise their neighbours when they need to combine or spread manure. Often the timing of these activities can be worked out to everyone's satisfaction, and there are numerous examples of farmers working with their local municipalities providing input into such things as drafting nutrient management plan requirements, for instance.

The Perth County Federation of Agriculture has representation on a municipal advisory committee. A committee of farmers has put in place a 1-888 number which local residents can call to report incidents which they believe are outside normal farming practices. As calls come in, the concerns are addressed and most often resolved to everyone's satisfaction. Measures such as these are designed to head off needless confrontation before it occurs. The vast majority of complaints in the past have been settled either among the parties themselves or with mediation help from DMAFRA staff.

I am confident that this will continue in the future, but if these avenues are exhausted and the dispute continues, the issues can be brought before the new Normal Farm Practices Protection Board for a ruling on a specific farm practice. I refer to it as the “new” board because it will be new. Representation from rural municipalities will be increased on that board, and this will ensure that a balanced approach, one that takes into consideration the rights of everyone in rural Ontario, will shape the rulings of this board. Board members will take into account such things as the purpose of the bylaw, the effect of the farming practice on neighbouring lands and whether the bylaw reflects a provincial interest as established under other legislation or policy statements.

This approach of putting awareness and education, conciliation and mediation first and backing these measures with strong, clear legislation is a winner for everyone. Because when Ontario's farming and food sectors prosper, all of Ontario prospers. Sometimes we forget that act but, as I said before, the agrifood industry contributes billions of dollars to our economy every year. The 67,000 farms, the 1,200 food processing companies, the infrastructure that supports them — it all adds up to hundreds of thousands of jobs, safe, wholesome and affordable food on the table and a quality of life in Ontario that is the envy

of the world. I believe, as do many others, that this is something worth protecting. The proposed Act to protect Farming and Food Production is a bill whose time I believe has come.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Further debate?

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): I would like to share my time with the member for Cornwall as well as the member for Kingston and The Islands.

We're pleased tonight to rise and speak to Bill 146, An Act to protect Farming and Food Production, at this third reading. It's interesting to note that the Ontario Federation of Agriculture was speaking about this bill in quite glowing terms, and rightly so. It's a bill that we support. I was interested to notice that this article that they wrote is dated September 1997, and here we are now at third reading of the bill.

This initiative by the Harris government was a commitment in their revolution document. It was something they wanted to do for the farm community. The Harris government has been very quick at bringing forth legislation that they did not discuss in the Common Sense Revolution, but in this regard, something they told the voters and the farm community they were going to be involved in, they've been very slow.

The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has had nearly three years now to bring this bill forward. Let me say that there's no doubt that agriculture has changed. Agriculture has always been in a state of change. We even have museums in this great province that show the changes that have taken place over the many, many years in the agricultural community. Agriculture has changed dramatically in the 25 years that I've been farming.

We need to develop a Farming and Food Production Protection Act to meet the needs of an industry that is ever-changing, to meet the needs of new technologies, to meet the needs of the new demographics that are taking place in rural Ontario.

The number of new farm operations in my area is actually quite small. Regrettably, there are not a lot of new young farmers entering into agriculture in my area. What is happening, not only in Essex and Kent but across the province, is that other farm operators are buying or renting from retired farmers. Therefore, the farm size is increasing. The 50- and 100-acre farm is not as prevalent as it once was, and many farms can be in the thousands of acres. So indeed, our farms are increasing in their land base.

What is happening because of that is that homes in rural Ontario are being bought by persons from urban centres. Indeed, in some areas homes are being built in the countryside by persons who simply wish to live in that area. They move to the country looking for many things: a change from urban life, of course, and a certain belief that there will be tranquillity for them in the rural area. Indeed, there can be and there is.

However, rural Ontario needs protection for its farmers and agricultural community from nuisance complaints that

might occur from those persons who move into those rural areas. They maybe weren't aware that agriculture today, with the machinery available and the size of the machinery available, the demands of getting to marketplace on time, the demands of fighting against weather conditions, whether those weather conditions be good or adverse, will cause farmers to work perhaps 24 hours a day, perhaps day after day.

I've heard, through our committee hearings, that people weren't aware that huge lights might be shining into their backyards. They weren't aware that greenhouses will have lights on 24 hours a day. They weren't aware that grain dryers and other equipment runs as much as 24 hours a day, perhaps for weeks on end. We have a situation of bright lights; we have a situation of some noise.

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Some persons perhaps felt that when they moved to the country, it was going to be completely quiet. This bill will help address nuisance complaints that would arise from odours, noise, dust, light, smoke, vibration and flies. This bill recognizes the modern technology and the modern farmer of today. We need to address legitimate complaints regarding farm practices. There must be a mechanism for dealing with those legitimate complaints, but also we must allow for normal agricultural practices to take place and to develop a dispute resolution process to deal with those legitimate complaints and to deal with frivolous complaints. So we have a required change to meet the new agricultural community of today. It's a required change and it's a welcome change.

This new act will assist in the changing technologies of today, in the demographic changes we see occurring in rural Ontario and in the changes that are brought about within government, amalgamations whereby councils that were once basically rural councils are now being mixed in with urban council representatives. I think the municipalities have looked for guidance in regard to this particular issue of normal farm practices and bylaws.

The rural-urban mix that is happening in Ontario today has created a situation even about the interest that councils would have about agriculture. Many rural communities fear that there may be a dominance by urban communities. After all, these larger centres have more votes and may even have more votes within a ward. Both the farming community and municipalities have been seeking guidance from the government in this regard.

Most farmers are good stewards of the land, the water and the air, and it only makes perfect sense that they would be, because these three elements are important to their personal livelihoods. The land is where they provide an income for their families, so that they can have their children grow, attend university, perhaps farm, perhaps take on other livelihoods of their own. The farmer's best interest is to be a good steward of the land, the water and the air.

Most farmers respect their neighbours; they respect both their non-farm neighbours and of course their farm neighbours. But in any society or within any group of people there are maybe a few who disregard those people

around them, and then we need laws or regulations for those who have a disregard for the community that they live in.

A good example would be persons who pass school buses when the red lights are flashing. We need something that will give an enforcement mechanism to those people who would flout the law, endanger the lives of young children by passing school buses when the red lights are flashing, and I proposed Bill 78, which would help in that regard.

Investing in agriculture requires a lot of capital; it requires a lot of dollars. Perhaps that's part of the reason that we don't see as many young farmers taking up in this industry. Farmers have to deal with risk, the risk of weather, and we know much about weather in eastern Ontario with the ice storm of this winter. Of course we need to have strong safety nets to protect farmers through adverse weather. That can be done through an excellent crop insurance program.

Market fluctuations — farmers live in a global market. Indeed, many of our prices are set in Chicago. We can help out with market fluctuations, with market revenue or what some people would call GRIP, and with a strong commitment to NISA, the net income stabilization account.

These are things that governments can do to enhance and protect those core programs within the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs so that farmers can reduce their risk in circumstances totally beyond their control.

One of the most glaring areas where they don't have control would be in regard to the weather: too little rain, too much rain, hail. The devastation that can be brought to an area in any of those regards can cause the agricultural community to see their crop vanish almost totally.

This government, since we returned to this House, has talked about listening. There were public hearings in regard to Bill 146 and there were some very good presentations, very constructive criticisms of the bill. There were 14 amendments put forward in the committee to this government that now says it wants to listen, but only one amendment was accepted by the government. It happened to be an amendment that our party put forth, that the third party put forth and that the government put forth. So in reality, the government only accepted its very own amendments and none of the others were accepted from either opposition party — constructive amendments to Bill 146.

None the less, we can support Bill 146, as we have throughout first and second readings, the committee stage and here at third reading. The Normal Farm Practices Protection Board will decide what is a "normal farm practice." When that board has its membership put in place, it's imperative on the government and the minister to be sure there are informed and knowledgeable people appointed to that board. They will need to be people who understand the changes that are occurring in agriculture and the changes that may come very quickly to the industry.

This board can dismiss if it is found that the practice that the farmer was involved with was indeed normal, whereby the farmer can continue in the manner he was accustomed to, or this board can order the farmer to cease practice if it's deemed that what he or she is doing is not normal.

I think it is good to note that in the bill the board can order the farmer to modify whatever endeavour he's involved with to make changes so that his practice would become perhaps, I'll use the phrase a little closer to normal, rather than being a little further away from normal. This is a good part of the bill. It allows some flexibility to the board to allow the farm operator to adjust to what has come forth.

We support Bill 146 and are pleased to speak to it on third reading. I think it's important to note that this bill does not allow the farming community to pollute. It does not allow farmers to work in a way that is totally without restraint.

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The Acting Speaker: Order. I don't know which conversation I should follow: Is it this one or that one? I think it's the member for Essex-Kent who has the floor, so if you want to keep your conversation low or go outside, it's your choice. I would prefer to listen to the member for Essex-Kent.

Mr Hoy: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Bill 146 does not allow the agricultural community to pollute. Indeed, agriculturalists will still be working under the Environmental Protection Act, the Pesticides Act, the Health Protection and Promotion Act or the Ontario Water Resources Act, so it would be wrong to say that this bill would allow farmers to pollute. It is in their own best interests to make sure that does not happen. The water, air and soil are most important to their livelihood.

A few days ago the minister was giving an answer to the member for Northumberland. I'm reading from a Hansard transcript. The minister, Mr Villeneuve, said:

"I recall a Liberal government from 1985 to 1990 which said it would double the expenditures on agriculture. Two years later they transferred the farm tax rebate from Municipal Affairs to Agriculture to make it look good — a little bit of smoke and mirrors."

Having been newly elected to this Legislature in 1995, I wanted to go back and have a look at that statement and do a little investigation. A look into public accounts shows the agricultural budget over the many years, and the farm tax rebate was included in the agricultural budget as far back as 1984-85, the last Tory year. So it's safe to say that the Liberals increased the agricultural budget, and that increase was 60% over the Tory spending. I believe the minister would want to know that it was the Tories who took the farm tax rebate from the municipal affairs portfolio and added it with agriculture. It certainly was not the Liberal Party that did that. Having been a farmer, and having been somewhat of a student of politics and watching what happens to the industry, I can say I'm quite proud of the Liberal achievements in agriculture during our term of office.

I have been reading lately that the minister has been making some remarks about just how much money the government is spending, and the smoke-and-mirrors approach the minister took as he incorrectly stated that it was the Liberals that put this transfer of the farm tax rebate into place. I want to say to those who are watching now, on Focus Ontario, July 13, 1996, in an answer to Robert Fisher, Noble Villeneuve said, "Yes, there have been some cuts to agriculture." Indeed the agricultural community knows that, agribusiness knows that, and the minister knew it as well when he told Robert Fisher, "Yes, there have been some cuts to agriculture."

The agricultural community embarked on a "rebuild, restore and reinvest" in agriculture just recently. They know full well the importance of the agricultural community. As a matter of fact, in regard to Bill 146 in this brochure, they talk about the environment. They talk about the need to protect our agricultural land base, all lands, the air and the water. They talk about best management practices, grower pesticide safety courses, nutrient management strategies, environmental farm plans. The farm community is active in making sure that the environment is protected not only throughout their lifetime but for decades to come. They also recognize that research is important. They recognize that market development is important and they recognize that the safety net that I mentioned earlier in regards to risk management is important: NISA, market revenue, crop insurance.

It's with pleasure that I say we support this bill. I think it will help agriculture in the near term. Hopefully, the bill is designed in a way that all of us can see the need for new technologies, technologies that perhaps none of us have ever even dreamt of. I simply say we support this bill at third reading. We wish it could have been before the House sooner, but the government sets the agenda of the day. So here we are at third reading, and hopefully this bill will see its way into law.

As I end my comments, I think you, Speaker, would be interested and very pleased to know that today is the occasion of my and my wife's 26th wedding anniversary. I know you would like them, back in Merlin, to know that.

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): I also would like to make a few comments on the third reading of Bill 146, An Act to protect Farming and Food Production. The bill was first introduced on June 26, 1997, and second reading was on December 17, 1997. The opposition regrets that it took so long between the first and second reading. All in all, it's here now. We're very supportive. We were pleased to be able to participate in the hearings on the bill. I'm sure that all members heard and learned a lot.

Another issue: Some of the groups in agriculture are very disappointed that the Ministry of Agriculture has been hit so hard by the funding cuts of this government, especially because when the Minister of Agriculture was in opposition, he always complained that the Ministry of Agriculture did not get its fair share of the provincial budget.

Fully 650,000 people are employed in agriculture, the second-largest employer in the province. They not only

produce the food; they add value. They also are caught in the changing times; they have to expand their farm operations. The farmers try to improve the infrastructure in the community. They're all willing to share and do their part to produce quality food, protect the air, water and land.

I know that many could not have believed what some of the agricultural people went through in the ice storm in eastern Ontario, especially those people who were in the dairy industry. Their farm fans were off; they couldn't get generators. Some of them tried to milk three times a day, trying to share generators. We heard a lot of great things that the government had done in the ice storm, but I was right out there in it and I saw what was happening. I saw the way the animals had to live; many caught pneumonia and many other things. Anyway, that's enough of that.

We're pleased to participate in the third reading. We're very supportive of Bill 146.

2030

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Some of the members opposite may think, "Why is the member for Kingston and The Islands getting up?" I just want people to know that we do have a very strong agricultural community in my riding. It may be the smaller part of my riding, but certainly the three island communities of Amherst, Howe and Wolfe Island and a very large portion of Pittsburgh township in my riding have a very strong agricultural community.

I would like to remind the members of the House once again that the matter with respect to the ferry subsidies relating to the three island communities has still not been resolved. There are many people, whose families have lived on those islands for many generations, who are still extremely concerned about what's going to happen to their regular ferry service to the mainland. It's their only lifeline to the mainland and they demand that this matter be resolved as soon as possible. These people have been left in an impossible situation, where the government has threatened them on almost a monthly basis, saying, "We're going to cut off subsidies as of the end of December 1997," then "We're going to cut them off as of the end of March 1998" — on a continual basis, and nothing has really happened.

A facilitator has been appointed, Mr Dale Martin. We're awaiting his report. But certainly from what we've heard so far, the results of that report do not look favourable to the people of those islands. I would once again implore this government that those island communities and the 2,000 people who live in them are just as much a part of this province as the other 10 or 11 million people who live here, and they have a right to the kind of services that protect their livelihoods and their way of living. If they were left completely to their own devices and had to fund their own ferry services, they would have to increase local property taxes sixfold or sevenfold.

I once again ask the parliamentary assistant to take this matter up with the minister. It is an agricultural matter as well as being a transportation matter. These islanders, who have lived there for many generations, demand action

from this government to ensure that their way of life and the farming activities they're involved in are protected.

I would like to congratulate my colleagues from Essex-Kent and from Cornwall, two gentlemen who have been involved in the agricultural business for a large part of their lives, for their excellent presentations this evening. They speak from the heart when it comes to the agricultural community. All of us can take note of what they have to say here. I was particularly struck by a comment made by one of my colleagues about the cuts to the agricultural community. We once again need to be reminded, especially the day after the budget was presented here, the budget in which the finance minister took such great pleasure in telling us about all the promises made and the promises kept.

Of course, as we all remember, our leader, Dalton McGuinty, pointed out that in two crucial areas promises haven't been kept, first in its plans not to close hospitals, but we all know that 36 hospitals in this province are slated for closure. Another was in its promise not to initiate user fees, because after all, as Mike Harris said, a user fee is a tax. We all know that senior citizens are now subjected to over \$200 million of user fees in the drug benefit area.

Also, in the field of agriculture, directly associated with this bill, he made a promise way back in 1994 that there would be no cuts for agriculture. I don't think that any sentence can be clearer than that: "No cuts for agriculture." Yet what has happened so far, in the agricultural budgets over the years? Well, \$45.1 million has been cut: \$23 million in cuts in the policy and farm finance area, \$10 million in cuts to education, research and labs, and \$11.4 million in cuts to food industry development.

When I get the opportunity to meet with some of the farmers in my riding, they always bring up the point that where the government ought to be spending some of its money is in the research area of agriculture. Some of these farmers aren't even directly involved in some of the research areas they would like to have the money spent in; in other words, there's no direct benefit to them. But they cannot understand how this government seems to have completely gone out of the research and development business. To my way of thinking, it is almost incomprehensible, because they like to fashion themselves as being the business party, the party that knows what's good for the people of Ontario and that likes to run the province in a business fashion. I know of no business that wouldn't spend at least some of its money in research and development.

I ask the parliamentary assistant, a man whom I highly respect, why don't you make an impression on the minister and tell him to put some of the needed funding back into the research and development area of the agricultural industry? It is certainly needed. Farmers talk to me about it. They know I'm a city boy and don't really understand that much about the agriculture business, but they do understand that there has to be an acknowledgement that we have to spend that money on research and development to ensure that the agricultural products we produce here in

this province are going to be of top standards and exportable throughout the entire world. Do something: Talk to the minister, talk to the finance minister. I know you have the ear of these people. Let's put some money back in that much-needed research and development area. If need be, even speak to the Premier about this particular issue.

The final point I want to make is simply this: I'd like to refer to the ice storm that occurred in eastern Ontario. We all know that the ice storm affected the area immediately to the east of Kingston all the way to Cornwall, up to Ottawa and down the Ottawa Valley; I guess Highway 41 was the demarcation between being affected and not affected.

That period of time certainly brought an awful lot of people together in many of our communities, in many of our cities, to work on the common objective of restoring the power as quickly as possible. No tributes could be enough to thank all those people from clear across this province who were involved in restoring the power, whether they were the linemen who were brought in from all the utility companies, whether they were the volunteers from all over the place or whether they were the people from the communities themselves. The effort put out was just fantastic and the way communities were brought together was absolutely amazing.

If there's one thing I learned during the ice storm, it was that even though there was an awful lot of devastation brought down upon our cities, upon our villages and upon our towns, the communities that suffered by far the most were the rural and agricultural communities.

Most of us who live in the cities and towns were inconvenienced for anywhere from a week to two or three weeks, and it made us realize how much Mother Nature really has control over us on an ongoing basis. It was also an experience in which neighbourhoods and people were brought together. But after the power was restored, we went on with our lives. There may have been a little damage that occurred, and some was settled by insurance companies and some by the fund currently being raised in eastern Ontario. It was certainly a problem for people in the urban areas, but nothing like the problems for the people in the rural areas, particularly the agricultural people.

I hadn't realized, for example, that if you don't milk a cow for a certain length of time, the cow dries up and you cannot use it as a dairy cow for a long time, nine months to a year. I didn't realize that the devastation to the sugar bushes, for example, can have such a long-lasting effect. It's not just a question that next spring comes along and everything grows again and we all go on with our lives.

The devastation wrought upon the agricultural community and the rural communities in eastern Ontario is still going on. Farmers are still suffering from this in an indirect way, in the income they're obviously not getting. In many cases, production probably won't be back to normal: in the case of dairy farming for at least another two to three years; in the case of sugar bushes, it's my understanding that the original prognosis, which was quite bad — for a long time — may not be quite as bad, but it's still

going to take anywhere from five to 10 to 15 years to bring that production back into operation.

2040

First of all, I hope that the people in the urban areas try to get a better understanding of that. I know the ice storm is a distant memory to most of us, and to some it may even have sort of a romantic feel about it, but there are still people who are affected by this on a day-to-day basis and maybe for many years to come. I hope we urbanites would reach a greater appreciation of what the farming community went through in dealing with that problem.

Second, I urge the Minister of Agriculture to start making those payments to those farmers who are affected, whose livelihoods are affected, whose incomes are affected on a day-to-day basis; start making those payments immediately and quickly. There's been some criticism about that, that it hasn't been forthcoming quickly enough. Within a department like that, surely they ought to have a better understanding than anybody of how the agricultural communities are hurting as the result of a storm like this. Let's be supportive of them and let's not take the position that now it's spring and things are starting to blossom and bloom etc, the ice storm is just a distant memory.

There are people who are still being affected on a day-to-day basis. They are mainly in the agricultural community. I hope this government and the people of Ontario will stick by our agricultural community and give them whatever support, both morally and financially, that we can. Minister and Parliamentary Assistant, start dealing with that problem immediately so that we can once again have a flourishing agricultural industry in eastern Ontario.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I don't want to take an extreme amount of time, but I want to put on the record a couple of issues.

First of all, for those people who are watching, we are debating the Farming and Food Production Protection Act. If you remember, last fall we were at second reading debate on this bill. At that time, the government, for its reasons — and I wouldn't argue against the reasons — was trying to push this bill quickly. Along with the Liberal Party, they wanted the bill to be passed lickety-split after second reading. I believe it would have been some time last November or last December. I don't remember the exact dates. I'd have to go back to my notes.

At that time, our party, the NDP said: "Listen, we want this bill to go to committee. There may be some very legitimate issues in this bill that this House has not had an opportunity to look at." We wanted to send this bill to committee to give the public, those people affected by the bill, the opportunity to read it, take a look at it and come back before the committee to make recommendations on how to make this bill better.

I remember that at that time the government stood in the House and said: "NDP, you're only trying to stall this bill. That's all you're trying to do. We want this bill lickety-split. We've got it straight. We're smart. We've got all the answers. Everything's fine." The Liberals agreed. The Liberals at that time agreed with you and said, "We

believe in agriculture too," just like the Tory government, the way they've cut agricultural budgets — oh, let's not go there; it'll just start another debate. But they also agreed with you. The Liberals wanted this bill passed lickety-split. We abstained and we said: "No, this thing has got to go to committee. There's a due process." As my good friend from Sault Ste Marie said on the other bill, where we dealt with the liability issue, there is a process in this House at committee and it is there for a reason. It's to give the public the opportunity to read the bill, to decide if the bill is okay, and where it's not okay, to make recommendations to the members of the Legislature to amend the bill.

Guess what happened. We sent the bill out to committee and, lo and behold, people came before the committee and said, "You know, we agree with where this bill is going." There were a lot of good parts in the bill. Most people who came before the committee supported it. But there were some omissions in the bill. I refer specifically to a submission — I think it was in eastern Ontario somewhere; I can't remember if it was Kingston or Cornwall, but somewhere in that area. Mr Waterworth came before the committee, along with other people in other communities, and said that when we wrote the bill — the Conservatives, that is — we had omitted deer and elk from the definition of what is covered under the bill. He made some submissions to explain that that is a business in itself and they need to have recognition under the act to make it easier for them to operate their business, for a whole bunch of reasons that are contained within this bill and within this debate.

Guess what happened? After that particular person came forward, along with some others, members of the committee said, "Oh, yes, we forgot something." I look again at what happened when Mr Waterworth came before the committee. Mr Danford, a good Conservative member across the way, said, "Yeah, you're right, we did forget something." Mr Chudleigh, another Conservative member, said, "Oh, yeah, we did forget something." Mr Cleary, a Liberal member, said, "Oh, yeah, we did forget something." And lo and behold, we made an amendment to the bill in order to recognize deer and elk under this particular bill.

The point I want to make is simply this: When you try to rush legislation through this House and you don't give proper time to have a good debate and an opportunity for the public to comment on the bill at committee, you will sometimes mess it up or forget to put in something that should be in the bill.

Here is an example of what could happen when you follow the due legislative process. If the NDP, last fall, had not obstructed the bill and said that we wanted it to go to committee for due process — it's not even obstruction. I'm saying "obstruction." I shouldn't say that because the reality is it's the process. We said, "We want to make sure the bill goes to committee in order for people to comment." If we had not done that, these people would not have been able to come before the committee and ask this Legislature to amend the bill.

The point I make is simply this: In the future, I hope the government uses this as a lesson on how possibly to better deal with legislation. They should slow down. They should take their time to draft bills based on what is going on out there and the best advice they can get, and allow a proper debate in the Legislature, something this government doesn't do very much any more because of the new rules. They can now pass a bill through this House lickety-split within about five sessional days. Imagine all the mistakes and errors you can make in that time. But if the government were to slow down the process, allow for proper consultation prior to drafting the bill, allow the bill to come for second reading, to have a proper debate where all members of the assembly on all sides of the House can have their say, and then, most importantly, allow the bill to go to committee so the most important people in this province, the public, can have a say, maybe then the government could get it right and maybe then the government could make some claim to having what is a much better bill.

Monsieur le Président, je veux vous remercier d'avoir eu la chance de mettre sur le record les commentaires que j'ai faits. Je veux seulement dire pour mes collègues francophones et pour les autres qui regardent que c'est un bon exemple, ce qui est arrivé dans ce projet de loi, de ce qui arrive quand un gouvernement ralentit et qu'ils sont forcés à prendre le temps d'aller au comité avec un projet de loi.

Simplement dit, le gouvernement voulait forcer ce projet de loi à travers l'Assemblée l'automne passé. Le Parti libéral, eux autres, ont été préparés à aller avec le gouvernement conservateur et à passer cette législation dans deux minutes. Nous dans le NPD, on a dit, «Non, donnez au public la chance d'avoir leur mot.» On a forcé le projet de loi au comité, et une fois au comité, le monde est venu, M. Waterworth et autres. Ils ont fait des suggestions très positives pour le projet de loi, et grâce à cela, on acceptait un amendement qui reconnaît les concerns de M. Waterworth.

Ça ne serait jamais arrivé si le NPD n'avait pas forcé la situation. Et je veux dire que je suis fier d'être ici aujourd'hui, membre du NPD, du caucus NPD, avec mes bons collègues M^{me} Lankin, M. Silipo et M. Martin, qui sont ici ce soir, et d'autres qui sont dans le building en train de travailler. On a fait notre job, on a ralenti le processus législatif comme il doit être pour donner la chance au public de faire un commentaire. Avec ça, on a un meilleur projet de loi.

Avec ces commentaires, j'aimerais vous remercier pour avoir eu la chance d'avoir ce débat. On attend un passage de ce projet de loi, troisième lecture, très vite.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments? Further debate?

Mr Danford: I will be very short in my remarks, but I would like to show appreciation for both parties supporting this bill. I think that has been the feeling all the way through. There has been general support from all three parties on this bill, and certainly from the farming community, the rural municipalities and rural Ontario in general. I think that works well.

There were some comments made about some other aspects of agriculture. They didn't really relate to this bill and we can debate them another time.

Certainly, research has been looked after, as the member for Kingston and The Islands mentioned. I think if he refers to the association with Guelph, he'll find the research is well on its way to recovering and revitalizing the agricultural industry.

I'd also like to comment about the member from the third party who mentioned committee work. We too feel that committee work is necessary. It does give ample opportunity for everyone, and we did send it to committee and we did have meetings across the province.

There was one amendment that I would also mention that was put forth by the government and was passed. It did address Mr Waterworth's concerns. I think it shows that this government was open from the beginning with the consultation process and is willing to move for the benefit

of the bill and for the agricultural community and for rural Ontario.

Mr Bisson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: They were forced into committee by the NDP; they didn't do it on their own.

The Acting Speaker: This is not a point of order.

Mr Danford has moved third reading of Bill 146, An Act to protect Farming and Food Production.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): Mr Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The House adjourned at 2051.

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of Ontario**

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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 7 May 1998

Jeudi 7 mai 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 7 May 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 7 mai 1998

The House met at 0959.

Prayers.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

TAXPAYERS SAVINGS MUNICIPAL AMENDMENT ACT (OTTAWA-CARLETON REGION), 1998

LOI DE 1998 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MUNICIPALITÉS AFIN QUE LES CONTRIBUABLES RÉALISENT DES ÉCONOMIES FISCALES (RÉGION D'OTTAWA-CARLETON)

Mr Guzzo moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 9, An Act to amend the Municipal Act to provide Savings to Taxpayers in the Ottawa-Carleton Region /
Projet de loi 9, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les municipalités afin de faire réaliser des économies fiscales aux contribuables de la région d'Ottawa-Carleton.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): It gives me a great deal of satisfaction to rise today to move second reading of this piece of legislation. It's a matter I have had considerable time to deal with over the past number of years. I go back to my first days on regional council in 1969 when the regional form of government was imposed by Queen's Park. We knew then we had too many municipalities in the 12 in number that were imposed. We knew also that we were dealing with too large an area in Ottawa-Carleton.

However, as time progressed and the consensus around the council table in the 1970s was reached, I can recall some discussions with then Chairman Denis Coolican of the regional municipality, Reeve MacQuarrie of Gloucester, Reeve Haydon in Nepean, Deputy Reeve Carmen there. Most particularly, I remember the wisdom, the foresight and the leadership of the then mayor of Eastview.

The issues were, how were we going to take services across the greenbelt? How were we going to pay for these services as they crossed the greenbelt that the federal government and the National Capital Commission had imposed on the Ottawa-Carleton area? The answer was a form of regional government where the infrastructure and the assets of the city of Ottawa would be used to finance the development of services, be it rapid transit or sewer

and water, to places such as Orleans, east Gloucester, south Gloucester, south Nepean, Barrhaven and Kanata in the west.

In the summer of 1973, I particularly remember a very, very dry summer, no watering of lawns for a period of four or five weeks, and the 400 or 500 homes that were in Barrhaven at the time were serviced by artesian wells. Had we been faced with a fire, we were told the entire area might have been completely eliminated. In those days, 80 cents of every dollar spent at the region came from the city of Ottawa.

In 1973, I particularly remember representing an inner part of the city when I was first elected. It was a very difficult sell to justify 80-cent dollars being used to finance the growth outside the region. But if it was a tough sell for me in Ottawa South and the Glebe, let me tell you that the mayor of Eastview had a tougher sell. If there is an argument in Ottawa-Carleton for a distinct society that shouldn't be touched, I suppose Eastview, which is now Vanier, is it because that mayor, who is now the member for Ottawa East, was the person who changed the name, had a vision and a regional responsibility, and he carried it out with leadership and with scope.

I don't know what happened to him when he became a member of the cabinet of the Peterson government. I remember the joy that we felt in Ottawa-Carleton thinking that with him as Minister of Municipal Affairs something would happen. Well, he commissioned a report; you know, get a university professor in the summer to do a report. That solves all the problems. I don't know what happened to a lot of people in that Peterson cabinet. I have to be honest.

Mr Peterson was a member who was called to the bar in 1969, and the class of 1969 was an exceptional class, a bumper crop. Mr Chiarelli, the new regional chair, was from that class. The late Larry Grossman was my seat-mate not just at Osgoode Hall but at Woodbine. Mr Justice Archie Campbell, who did the excellent report on police services as a result of the Bernardo affair, was a classmate, as was Mr Justice Dean Hamlyn of the federal court. I think of that because I look at that leadership race of the opposition that recently produced a leader from Ottawa and I notice that not one of the first four finishers in that race served under Mr Peterson. I think there's a strong message there, but I digress.

Today we still have in Ottawa-Carleton 12 city halls, 12 city clerks, 12 planning departments, as we had in 1969. But today we have 100% agreement, resolutions from every council moving ahead with a proposal not for

one city, not for three cities, but to move ahead and get away from 12 to some reasonable, realistic number. Each council adopted a date of November 12 — the same day that's contained in my bill — on which, if an agreement had not been reached locally, to call upon the minister to move forward with some leadership and some foresight for this area and have a commissioner come in and resolve the matter on behalf of the citizens who are paying the freight for the waste and duplication that is present in Ottawa-Carleton today.

I want you to know that citizens' panel, which was disbanded recently, was made up of some of the finest citizens in the Ottawa area — Grete Hale, a business leader; Marianne Wilkieson, the former mayor of Kanata; Arnold Faintuck, the former director of planning at the city of Ottawa — selected by a committee headed by a former Governor General and a former federal court justice.

Why that agency is disbanded today — they would tell you that they were sabotaged. The argument comes forward that there's no time for public participation with the time frames within this bill that I present today, but I suggest to you that there is still plenty of time if there's leadership. I have to say with a great deal of satisfaction that Mayor Watson in the city of Ottawa, Mayor Coburn in Cumberland and the new regional chair are providing exactly that leadership and exactly the foresight and the vision that the mayor of Eastview provided to the regional council on which I had the privilege to serve.

I don't know why that citizens' panel disbanded, I don't know whether it was sabotage, but I do know this: There was tremendous concern through the region because it was becoming apparent that this panel was going to succeed. This panel was going to accomplish what had not been accomplished over the past 25 years. We were no longer going to have 84 municipal politicians representing 750,000 people in the Ottawa-Carleton area. We probably have something like 16 or 20, more akin to what Calgary has, serving around 700,000 to 800,000 people there. Of course Calgary doesn't have the benefit or the burden, if you will, of the National Capital Commission.

Under the regional form of government, the argument that I've heard with regard to the French language is countered by the fact of what has happened in the regional municipality over the past 29 years. I know the satisfaction that the then mayor of Eastview had in protecting those services and the services in the French language pursuant to the legislation that this government and the past two governments have had in place.

I can't explain to you why in the hospital structure that act cannot protect the same people for the same reason, but it seems that it's time we have a new system. There's \$750,000 being expended to change the system, but I don't worry about that under this or any mode of governance that comes forward. I know the people will provide that service and I know they will be faithful to the commitment of the legislation that's there. I also know that there won't be a sheep doctor in charge of implementing any changes that come forward in here as we

have in the hospital restructuring commission, so I feel confident.

I also feel confident that if it is necessary, and I hope it isn't, to move forward with a commissioner in the month of November of this year, a commissioner will be selected from the Ottawa-Carleton area and that the wisdom of some other city may not have to come and impose a position. I have suggested in the past a number of possibilities and a number of people who could serve that function and serve it well.

I suggest also that in the next five months there is plenty of time for public participation. We're not going to have what we would have had if the citizens' panel had been allowed to complete its task, and I regret that very much. But there's no reason why all public participation that is required — we've had 25 years of it since the mayor of Eastview, the now member for Ottawa East, and I first negotiated this at the council table of the regional municipality. I don't think we need another 25 years. I really don't think we need very much additional time. I think the commissioner should be responsible and directed by the minister to provide sufficient time for public participation in the period that he or she or they will be in a position to assess the positions of the various divisions within the RMOC.

I thank you for the opportunity of making the comments.

1010

M. Gilles E. Morin (Carleton-Est) : La question de la restructuration et de la fusion des municipalités suscite de nombreuses controverses. Que ce soit en Ontario ou dans d'autres provinces, dès qu'on entend passer de la parole aux actes, on assiste à une levée de boucliers de la part de ceux qui s'inquiètent qu'ils seront perdants dans l'opération.

Permettez-moi de me placer au-dessus de la mêlée. Mon devoir est de défendre les intérêts de mes électeurs de Carleton-Est. Mais l'enjeu dépasse les limites de mon comté et la décision qui sera prise va affecter tous les gens d'Ottawa-Carleton pour de longues années à venir. En fait, c'est de l'avenir de 800 000 personnes dont il est question.

La question de savoir si on doit supprimer le gouvernement régional, c'est-à-dire la municipalité régionale d'Ottawa-Carleton, et la remplacer par 11 super-municipalités, a fait l'objet de longs et âpres débats. Encore aujourd'hui il y a toujours deux groupes qui s'opposent et qui défendent mordicus l'une ou l'autre thèse. Malheureusement, aucun des deux groupes ne donne l'impression qu'ils en arriveront à un compromis dans un avenir prochain.

Pourtant, ce n'est pas faute d'efforts. Il y a eu des consultations publiques organisées dans le seul but d'écouter la population. Il y a eu la création d'un comité de citoyens chargé de consulter la population, et ce comité devait émettre des recommandations. On a appris récemment que ce comité s'était sabordé. Enfin, il y a eu des annonces de projets de fusion de municipalités. Mais

malheureusement, il ne semble pas qu'il y ait de suite à ces annonces.

Toutes ces initiatives, toutes ces énergies dépensées à faire valoir une position par rapport à une autre n'ont pas éclairé les enjeux.

J'en arrive à la conclusion qu'il y a eu de nombreux efforts pour consulter la population et que la population semble nous indiquer, à nous les élus, qu'il est temps de prendre une décision. Le projet de loi 9 invite la MROC à présenter une proposition de restructuration d'ici le 12 novembre 1998. J'y vois trois avantages.

Premièrement, les élus et les citoyens détiennent toujours l'initiative car c'est à la communauté d'Ottawa-Carleton qu'il revient de proposer un projet de restructuration. Si nous persistons à nous enliser dans des débats stériles, nous allons abuser de la patience de la population, et le gouvernement provincial nous imposera sa décision. Donc, je préfère le projet de loi 9, même s'il n'est pas parfait et même s'il ne fait pas l'unanimité à une décision imposée par le gouvernement provincial.

Deuxièmement, on met fin aux débats stériles et aux chicanes qui s'enveniment et deviennent des querelles de personnalités. Puisqu'il n'y a pas de place pour le compromis, il faut trancher. Enfin, nous allons consacrer nos énergies à bâtir l'avenir.

Pour conclure, je suis disposé à accorder mon appui au projet de loi 9, mais mon appui est assorti de deux conditions. Tout d'abord, les droits des Franco-Ontariens doivent être inclus dans le transfert de responsabilités aux municipalités. Le gouvernement provincial pourrait enchâsser ces droits par une nouvelle loi, puisque la Loi 8 ne s'applique pas aux municipalités. La MROC, pour sa part, pourrait s'engager à modifier sa charte et y ajouter le droit des Franco-Ontariens à être servis en leur langue.

Ensuite, si le gouvernement provincial devait intervenir, par le biais d'un commissaire nommé par lui, je demande qu'un processus soit prévu afin que la population soit consultée avant qu'une décision finale soit prise.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): It's somewhat unusual for a member of cabinet to speak on a bill, but I thought that in this case, because I have represented five of the municipalities in the Ottawa-Carleton area for some long period of time, I should bring some thoughts to this debate.

I'll say at the outset that we have talked about restructuring in the Ottawa area for a long period of time. There has indeed been some restructuring; that took place a long time ago. In the 1970s we had a significant restructuring within the Ottawa-Carleton area, particularly with the rural municipalities where we saw in the now-township of West Carleton the coming together of three municipalities to make one of the largest land area municipalities in all of Ontario. We also saw some amalgamation in the now-township of Rideau between the old township of North Gower and the township of Marlborough into the new township of Rideau.

We went through some amalgamations, some creations in 1978. I was proud to be at the forefront of the creation

of the city of Kanata at that time when I first sat here in this Legislature. I met with many of the mayors, not only of the areas I have the privilege of representing, but of some of the other areas as well.

As you may remember, in the early 1990s the former NDP government brought forward a restructuring of responsibilities between local municipal government and regional government. After that occurred, many of the leaders of the local municipal government felt it was no longer tenable to retain the status quo with regard to the existing 11 municipalities plus the one regional government. I said to them at that time that if they wanted restructuring, fine, they should then go out and consult with the public, find a local solution and we would be happy to put it in place.

They all assured me at that time — I'm talking prior to the last municipal elections — that was the will of their councils, and off on to the consultation route they went. As the consultations took place, as they went down a road, they came to us and said, "Please put us under a final, binding solution." We did not do that, we did not, as a government, choose to put regional government in that particular position.

I had always held out the prospect of this being done by each region on a request to the Legislature. I think that would make sense. I think our government — and I have taken the position — wants to see a locally driven solution. I know feelings run high on the various kinds of restructuring that could take place. I am, however, hopeful that a local solution can be found which will be acceptable to most of the partners involved in this debate.

I also want to say that while Mr Guzzo's bill has specific dates, like November 12, as a date upon on which an end to a certain part of the process would come, I would perhaps be more flexible and suggest that if those members, as I will, support this bill, we refer it to a committee and have the opportunity for local input from our local mayors, our regional councillors, our local leaders who might want to alter the process outlined in Mr Guzzo's bill.

But I do believe that the basic thrust of Mr Guzzo's bill is solid and right. I think the people of Ottawa-Carleton are sick and tired of this issue. They have heard enough. They want a solution. They want to drive a solution. If, in fact, the leaders of our local governments cannot come to a committee, cannot come to a consensus, then we should kill this issue and forget about restructuring for a period of time, because we should either have it or not have it. We do not want it to be driven from this place, I think all parties would agree with that, but we cannot subject the people of Ottawa-Carleton to a continuing debate which will never end.

That would be my preference with regard to this bill. I will support this bill because it will in fact, in my view, give an end to a process which has been far too long and far too inconclusive.

1020

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): I am pleased to join other members from Ottawa-Carleton in speaking to and

supporting the member for Ottawa-Rideau's bill to facilitate municipal restructuring in Ottawa-Carleton. It is an important part of a process that all municipal governments in Ottawa-Carleton agreed to last year in order to bring about more efficient government to ratepayers in my community. It is a process I am all too familiar with as less than a year ago I was a member of regional council in Ottawa-Carleton and a participant in the effort of reform.

I represent the riding of Ottawa West in Ottawa-Carleton, a community of over 750,000 people, the most over-governed region in Canada, with 84 elected politicians from 11 municipalities and a regional council, plus the National Capital Commission, a provincial government and a federal government.

Municipal reform in Ottawa-Carleton, I can tell you, has been a long and constant issue. As a matter of fact, the establishing of the region in 1965 was the result of a petition by 17 municipalities in Carleton county unanimously asking the government of the day to review their system of municipal governance. However, since that time we have seen the Mayo commission in 1976, the Bartlett commission in 1988, the Graham commission in 1990 and the Kirby commission in 1992, giving us today a directly elected regional council and 11 municipalities in Ottawa-Carleton. Change, as you can see, clearly has been slow and painful.

In 1994, I attended the Association of Municipalities of Ontario annual conference and heard the then leader of the third party, Mike Harris, stun delegates with his announcement that his party would reduce the number of municipalities in Ontario by one third to eliminate waste and duplication. In 1995, he won the election and began implementing his agenda. First, grants to municipalities were cut and then legislation, the infamous Bill 26, was introduced to permit provincially appointed commissioners to restructure municipalities. In 1996, the government appointed the Who Does What panel to examine provincial and municipal responsibilities. The municipal affairs minister, Al Leach, told AMO delegates that year that municipalities should start restructuring themselves or else it would be done to them.

Then early in 1997 the famous mega-week announcements occurred where the Harris government downloaded over \$3 billion worth of services to municipalities, including new responsibilities in social assistance and social housing, in exchange for the government assuming education funding from property taxes. Unfortunately, it's not a revenue-neutral exercise. In Ottawa-Carleton, property taxpayers went on the hook for over \$200 million in additional services at a net cost of some \$50 million.

As a result, over the past two years municipalities in Ottawa-Carleton have been exploring various restructuring models. The city of Ottawa made proposals, the 10 other mayors made proposals, regional council made theirs, and the cities of Kanata and Nepean began merger discussions, as did the city of Gloucester and the township of Cumberland. They began merger discussions.

To facilitate a common approach, the government appointed Gardner Church as a provincial mediator, but it

was difficult to achieve consensus other than that change was necessary. Then in March 1997, a colleague of mine at regional council, Brian McGarry, proposed that all municipal and regional councils agree to the establishment of an unbiased citizens' panel to develop and examine governance models. If a model could achieve triple majority support, ie, a majority of local council representing a majority of the population plus a majority of regional council, reform would be implemented. However, if the process was not successful, then the government would appoint a provincial commissioner to determine the shape of municipal governance in Ottawa-Carleton.

This proposal, by motion, was accepted at each of the 11 municipal councils in Ottawa-Carleton: by Cumberland, by Gloucester, by Goulbourn, by Kanata, by Nepean, by Osgoode, by Ottawa, by Rideau, by Rockcliffe Park, by Vanier, by West Carleton and by regional council, and was endorsed by the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

To complete the agreement, however, we needed to have an amendment to the Municipal Act because the Municipal Act doesn't cover regions in its restructuring provisions. As a result, the member for Ottawa-Rideau introduced Bill 141 last June 1997, which had the complete support of the municipalities. Unfortunately, as we know, this bill died on the order paper with the prorogation of the Legislature last December. Now it appears before us today as Bill 9. Unfortunately in the interim the citizens' panel has collapsed, leading to some scrambling by the municipalities to re-establish a new mechanism to develop a made-in-Ottawa-Carleton solution. According to the time lines agreed to as part of the McGarry initiative, agreed to by the municipalities, the municipalities have until November 1998 to develop a solution, which this bill today recognizes and accommodates.

I am, for one, hopeful that a made-in-Ottawa-Carleton solution is still possible, as all the parties in this process — the municipalities, the region and ratepayers themselves — realize that the status quo is not an option. We can no longer afford 11 city halls plus a regional centre with 12 clerks' departments, 12 planning departments, 12 legal departments etc. The cost of provincial downloading has made this doubly imperative.

What will the solution be? I cannot say. Some, I know, advocate for a single city while others call for a more evolutionary model of three or five cities with a regional government. However, I can tell you that when it comes to the imposition of a provincial commissioner to settle the issue, as the municipalities have agreed to, I will be looking for changes to ensure that the public will be able to participate in the model selection process and that there is accountability.

All too often we have seen the province's hired gun ride into town, walk all over local identities and years of tradition and ride away, leaving others to clean up the mess. We will be offering amendments to give direction to the commissioner to investigate, consult and develop

models of municipal governance that will be taken to the electorate by way of plebiscite to judge, leading in turn to a recommendation by the commissioner to cabinet, which will then be able to decide and be held accountable for that decision.

Today, this bill is part of a process that admittedly has its political difficulties. However, the public demands change, and this government's downloading initiatives, for good or ill, have made change necessary.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member for Ottawa-Rideau.

Mr Guzzo: Let me just make a couple of points —

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Could you stop the clock, because the government members are going to lose time here.

Normally it's a tradition in private members' hour that the person who is moving the bill has the first part of the speech and wraps up at the end. The rest of the time is given to members of their own caucus. You are going back to the member for Ottawa-Rideau and it seems to me it should be one of the other members. He'll wrap up at the end.

The Acting Speaker: That is a point of order. When I looked up I saw they were both — in this case, in deference to the member for Ottawa-Rideau, I am going to be recognizing the member for Nepean. That's the advice I've been given. The Chair recognizes the member for Nepean.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): Mr Speaker, I would ask for unanimous consent to reset the clock to nine minutes and 45 seconds, where it was at the outset of these remarks.

The Acting Speaker: This order of business will be over at 11 o'clock regardless.

Mr Baird: Can I ask for unanimous consent that the clock be reset at nine minutes and 45 seconds?

The Acting Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

Mr Baird: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Let me say at the outset of my remarks that I have a tremendous amount of respect for my colleague the member for Ottawa-Rideau, but on this issue we just have an honest difference of opinion. Let me also add my thanks to my colleague Al Leach and his political staff for their open-door policy and for always soliciting the input of my constituents. That's something I greatly appreciate.

Change is always difficult. It's never easy. There are no areas more so than the issues of governance and community. This is especially the case in my home region. There is a consensus in Ottawa-Carleton that we can find a better, more efficient form of government, but there is no agreement on what form that should take. It has been debated, it has been discussed, but this discussion has been by and large one with élites: by the crowd at the Ottawa-Carleton Board of Trade, by those in the media at the Ottawa Citizen and the Ottawa Sun, and by local politicians. They see this issue as an urgent priority.

The people in my riding of Nepean by and large haven't said this is a priority. Their priorities and concerns

are the economy and jobs. They're concerned about whether our health care system will be there for their elderly parents when they need it; they're concerned about the quality of their children's education; and they're concerned about their ability to feel safe and secure in their own homes.

1030

The average person whom I am privileged to represent is not up at night losing sleep over this issue; they're too busy working hard and raising their families. But they do care. In Nepean, people care that our city has been able to cut taxes for the last two years and that they've been able to freeze taxes for more than five years. They care that their taxes have been kept below the rate of inflation for more than 20 straight years. That taxes have been kept below the rate of inflation is something that people in Nepean take ownership in. People in Nepean believe that you don't borrow money on the backs of the next generation to live beyond your means today. For that reason, all Nepean residents take great pride in being able to live in a debt-free municipality, pride because, as a community, we've collectively insisted upon it for more than a generation now.

Our local government rolls out the red carpet to investment and to jobs. The high-tech sector in the west end of the region, centred in Nepean, has flourished and grown over the past 30 years, I think in part because Nepean has had a pro-job-creation stance. That sector could have just as easily chosen the east end more than 30 or 35 years ago when they began setting up, but they chose the west end for a reason: because Nepean and the west-end suburbs have been pro job creation and pro economic development. We have benefited from that.

This bill could set aside those accomplishments. It would ask us to pick up the tab for decades of profligate high spending in the neighbouring municipality of Ottawa. The city of Ottawa is drowning in a sea of debt and wants Nepean taxpayers to belly up to the bar and clear the tab by taking on their debt. To my good friends the mayor of Ottawa, Jim Watson, and Deputy Mayor Allan Higdon, who have begun to finally clean up this mess in this year's budget, I say, no way.

Bill 26, passed by this Legislature more than 18 months ago, enabled local county governments to restructure. But let's be very clear at the outset of this debate so there is no disagreement of opinion, so it's on the table: This bill goes much further than Bill 26.

I have letters here from the mayor of Kanata, Merle Nicholds, opposing the bill. She says that if Bill 26 powers were brought in and extended to Ottawa-Carleton, she would support them, but she believes this bill goes much further.

I have a letter I received just this morning from Janet Stavinga, the mayor of Goulbourn, the largest rural municipality, which believes that this bill goes far beyond what was passed in their resolution last year.

The mayor of Gloucester says the same thing. The mayor of Gloucester — a debt-free municipality — Claudette Cain, who has cut taxes this year, who cut taxes

by 5% last year, is concerned about the effect it has on her residents.

Finally, I have a letter from the acting mayor of Nepean, Rick Chiarelli, who indeed echoes the concerns and objections of Nepean to this piece of legislation.

All these mayors have clearly said that they don't want this bill and they want it defeated, because they too believe it is wrong.

Bill 26 says that if you want to restructure, you can restructure; that Bill 26 would give you the tools to do the job; that Bill 26 would allow local municipalities to restructure locally, and it would give a whole series of tools for them to do it.

But make no mistake about it, this bill goes much further. It says that you will restructure and that you will restructure quickly, all in the belief that the mass public has somehow been engaged in the process, that the average citizen has somehow called a legislative 911 demanding immediate action. This has not happened. When it does happen, according to this bill, we will have dissolved our authority as legislators without the requisite safeguards: no taxpayer protection for Nepean residents, who very likely would pick up the tab for Ottawa's debt and high taxes; no protection for our rural townships that would allow them to opt out.

Let me emphasize that point. Nothing in this legislation would allow the townships of Osgoode, Rideau, Goulbourn and West Carleton to opt out of any forced restructuring — nothing. There are no safeguards on labour transition issues or on issues affecting language, no safeguards to ensure that big-spending politicians from Ottawa won't take advantage of the opportunity to engage in an orgy of new spending.

While some in my riding may very well support this bill, I believe the vast majority of people do not support it, nor would they be comfortable nor satisfied with the outcome that would likely result from this bill. As their representative in this Legislative Assembly, it is my responsibility to be that voice.

I want to be very clear. On this issue, it's very easy because I personally and passionately agree with my constituents on this important issue. People in Nepean aren't prepared to pay off Ottawa's massive debt and to pay the highest property taxes in Canada. I disagree with this bill. I think it's the wrong way to go. I do not support it and I will vote against it.

Mr Guzzo: Let me just say that I did have a couple of minutes to finish my initial address and my agreement was that there would be five minutes allowed for the member for Nepean, notwithstanding the fact that he never requested same, he never asked for same, but he sent somebody as his ambassador — I had agreed to it.

I have to question why the change in procedure today. Under the rules, I was recognized and I have to question why it changed. It seems to me we have a change in the procedures around here whenever it's convenient and I vehemently oppose it.

In the last minute available to me, let me make one point. My bill at no time recommends a preferred mode of

governance. I am not asking for one city. Most of the criticism that has come forward has been against the fear of a one-city structure. I violently disagree with the submissions made by the member for Nepean with regard to the non-ability of the agricultural areas to opt out.

The question remains that the local opportunity is there in the next five months and any arrangement that can be worked out, a triple majority is reached, can be ratified. The opportunity for the rural municipalities to be allowed to remain on their own or to join with Almonte and Carleton Place to the west, or to Russell to the south, is still available. I find it very, very disheartening to hear the comments that have been made.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. Further debate?

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I want to say at the outset that I support this bill in principle. I think we've had enough of the kind of reaction in part that we've heard, of people digging in their heels. They can't think bigger than just their own local municipality.

The bill is not perfect; I think that was pointed out by the member for Carleton. That's why it's important at committee that the committee do some work and listen to people and listen to their views.

As the member for Rideau talked about, I won't go over the history. It's been covered quite sufficiently by two or three members. But I must say I was disappointed to see the undercutting and the less than honourable behaviour of certain municipalities towards a very distinguished, competent and dignified group of citizens that were not getting paid for this particular job and who were selected on the basis of their past contributions to the community. I think that's got to stop.

There is no question that all the municipalities had endorsed having a commission or a commissioner in the event that the panel, or the municipalities themselves and the region, could not come up with a particular set of proposals.

1040

So this bill, as I see it, is like an insurance policy, because there is still time, there is still seven months. I received a notice this morning, and there's some activity going on between the region and a few cities, some discussions. They're looking at having what I gather are some public hearings to continue this particular process. So at the end of the day it is highly possible that this bill will not be required.

One of the arguments I heard yesterday, from some of the people from Nepean of course, was that if we put in this bill, it will discourage people and they'll just sit back and wait. I suggest the complete contrary. Knowing there is this bill, people have not backed off. They know this is a last-ditch effort to resolve this issue, finally, after more than two decades, that will place pressure on the municipalities and people to get together and come up with a home-grown solution, which everyone agrees is the best possible solution.

There are some concerns related to the bill, and I'd like to identify those quickly. I only have a minute and a half.

There are some related to whether this will be one commissioner or whether it should be two or three. These are the issues that have been raised and I think that should be discussed. I don't have a particular preference. It's fine with me whether it's one good person or three good people to come up with and propose the final options, if required, to cabinet.

There were other concerns that had to do with community identity, but that doesn't come out in this bill. This bill provides that in any solutions that come up, that's got to be considered. Of course there's the whole area of strong public participation, and in talking to the mover of this particular motion I'm convinced that's what he wants to see, and that's what we all want to see: Let's get the ball moving and let's get things on the road again.

The extent of consultations is one of the strongest points that have been made. I, for one, and I think all of us, want to see that happen. I recommend that this go to committee. At committee there will be plenty of activity. I suggest that we have some of the hearings at the committee stage, and I think some of those hearings should be in the Ottawa-Carleton area, which will give full opportunity for people to do this.

At the end of the day, the regions and the municipalities can take action. They're doing that now. I hope they continue to do it and come up with a suggestion so we do not need this particular bill at the end of the day.

Mr Bisson: I rise as the municipal affairs critic for the NDP caucus and I want to speak in that capacity. I want to put on the record up front that this party is going to take a very consistent stand when it comes to amalgamations, and that is that the province should not be forcing amalgamations through the Bill 26 process.

I really get offended as a local citizen in the community where I come from, Timmins, when the government and some of the government members seem to be saying that the only way amalgamation could ever happen in the province is if the province comes in with their omnibus Bill 26 and forces the amalgamation to happen, because: "Those municipal people just can't get it straight. All they do is turf protection and they're not going to be able to do anything on their own because they're not going to do the responsible thing." Well, excuse me. Municipalities across Ontario over the past number of years, way before Bill 26 and way before the Mike Harris government was ever elected, have done amalgamations themselves without having the province drive it.

I come from such a community. About 25 or 26 years ago, what is now the city of Timmins used to be Timmins, Mountjoy township, South Porcupine and Whitney. The same arguments I hear today in the debate around Ottawa-Carleton were made at the time by those for and against that amalgamation, as were the arguments we heard when the megacity debate went on. Those arguments were going on, but they were going on within the community. The councillors of the day decided it was in the best interests of the citizens and the taxpayers of our community to amalgamate into one city.

We had the heated debates at the local council chambers of the various municipalities. I remember quite well the debates going on in the public and what was written in the paper, in the Timmins Daily Press, and what was on CFTL-TV and CKGB and CFTL radio. In the end, it was the local municipality that made the decision. It was the residents of the community who made the final decision. The councils of the area put forward to the citizens the plan they had put together, and by way of referendum, the people of the area of Timmins voted to become an amalgamated city of Timmins. It was locally driven.

Thunder Bay, Port Arthur — that wasn't forced by the province. The good citizens of the area of Port Arthur and Thunder Bay came together themselves. They recognized the need to amalgamate, for a number of various reasons. Again, it was a locally driven process. The councils drove it, and the residents of those two particular communities decided to come together and force the amalgamation themselves through a democratic process.

My objection to the bill we have before us today about Ottawa-Carleton is that we seem to be saying that we can't trust the local municipal politicians and we can't trust the local citizens to do what might be the best thing. Who are we to decide? That is a decision that should be made by the area municipalities and the residents. In the end, it is their community, it is not mine, and I don't think that we as a Legislature, through Bill 26, should enact any kind of provision that forces amalgamation without the consent of the local citizens.

I listened to the debate earlier from both the Liberal caucus and from some of the Conservative members, saying that Nepean and Gloucester and Vanier and others had taken a position at council. But it's interesting to note that there have been referendums on this issue. In the referendum in I think the city of Nepean, I don't remember the exact numbers but something like 75% or 80% — it was actually higher — of the residents of Nepean said no, they don't want a big huge city of Ottawa.

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: I'll come to the Liberal position in a second. Don't worry.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): There is one?

Mr Bisson: Oh, they have a position. I'm quite disgusted by what's going on here.

The point is that the referendum was done and the people of that community said no, they do not want to come together as one municipality, that if there's any amalgamation, they want to amalgamate with the community next to them. Let that be a local decision.

The other point I want to make is that I think there's an economy of scale when it comes to cities.

Before I get to that, I think we can all agree here in this Legislature that Ottawa is one of the nicest cities in Ontario. Ottawa, Vanier, Gloucester, Nepean, Kanata — that whole Ottawa region is one of the nicest areas in the province. Those municipalities are clean and well run and they're safe communities to live in, and they've got some good programs at the local level to help move the economy of the area.

Mr Cullen: They are run by Liberals.

Mr Bisson: Maybe not after this, let me tell you.

The point is this: Why did the regional municipalities around Ottawa become what they are? Because those local municipalities were able to make their own decisions. Nepean, for example, was able to say what it is they want to focus on as residents within that area of the Ottawa region, and they focused quite well on what was good for them. The people of Gloucester made some different decisions about what they want to focus on. What you managed to do is build quite a dynamic area in and around the Ottawa region with all those municipalities. It happened, in my view, because those municipalities were small enough that they were able to focus on what is important to their communities and to the citizens and to focus on the priorities that are important for their own region.

If you look at what happened here in Toronto, the government forced amalgamation into the now city of Toronto of a number of communities like Scarborough, Etobicoke, Toronto and others. We said that somehow that was going to be better. Has anybody taken the time to go and watch some of those council meetings lately? My Lord, they're sitting there now and they can't deal with the big issues of the city because they have to deal with such issues as where a red light goes, where a stop sign goes, and "Can I get a permit to dig a tree out of my yard?" and all those issues best dealt with at local council. The darned thing is so huge, the municipal council, that it's not efficient any more to deal with the matters that come before the council.

The point I would make as a New Democrat is that it's more important to have councils that are manageable, that are able to deal with the local issues in an efficient way for those municipalities. I believe there's an efficiency of scale.

1050

Je veux dire très simplement que la position du Nouveau Parti démocratique est très claire. La position dit que si une fusion va être faite localement, par les municipalités, ça doit être un processus local et non celui de la province à travers la Loi 26, qui tout à coup pousse le processus au point à ce que la province rentre et dit ce qui va arriver. On sait, avec ce projet de loi, que c'est ça qui va arriver.

I've had the opportunity to meet with a number of people from the various communities of Kanata, Nepean, Vanier and Gloucester. One of the things I'm concerned about is the way this thing is being brokered. There is a sense out there, and this is my read on it, that the city of Ottawa, along with the region of Ottawa, is trying to control this process.

Interjection: They can't.

Mr Bisson: This is the perception, all right? The perception out there is that there are two communities that are trying to push this process, and the process set up under this bill makes it virtually impossible for the local communities to come to an agreement about how they're going to be able to amalgamate together and puts the

municipalities in the position of having to have a decision imposed on them by the restructuring commissioner appointed under Bill 26.

Mr Cullen: This was a year ago.

Interjections:

Mr Bisson: The Liberals are heckling. Let me get to where your position is. The Liberal position is most interesting. I remember that when omnibus Bill 26 came into this House the Liberals, along with the New Democrats, forced the situation under Bill 26 by sitting in the House and not allowing the vote to take place. Why? Because —

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): It was the Liberals who sat in the House; Alvin sat in the House.

Mr Bisson: The last time I checked, the New Democrats were here a long — anyway, I'm not going to debate with you guys.

The point is that the Liberals and the New Democrats opposed Bill 26 on the basis of a number of things, but one of them was that we didn't believe in the changes that were being made under Bill 26, how municipalities are forced to merge and to amalgamate. We thought that was the wrong position for the government to take and that we should allow the process to be driven locally. The Liberals sat in the House with us and opposed the Tory government when it came to Bill 26.

We then got into the debate around the megacity. The Liberal position then was the same as the NDP position is now: that they didn't believe for one second that the cities of Toronto, Scarborough and the rest should be forced into an amalgamation by the province of Ontario. They believed, the Liberals of the day, that the local area municipalities in and about Toronto should be the ones to make the decision about how big the amalgamation should be and when it should take place. They were very clear.

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): So why is Ottawa different?

Mr Bisson: That's the point: Why is Ottawa different? All of a sudden the Liberals are saying by way of this bill — because they have a bunch of Liberal councillors in the city of Ottawa and a whole bunch of other places who all of a sudden are taking a party position, they've flip-flopped their position. The Liberal caucus is now saying that they favour Bill 26, that they favour amalgamation and, "What we did when it came to the city of Toronto, oh, well, that was then, this is now."

Mr Shea: Shameful.

Mr Bisson: "That was different. What happened in Toronto, that wasn't amalgamation; that was a forced amalgamation." Well, what do you think this is going to be? Do you think for one second the process being derived under this bill is going to allow a local solution to be brokered? You're going to end up forcing those municipalities under a deal done by the Minister of Municipal Affairs through his commissioner. That's what's going to be happening over here.

The game you're playing, you're saying, "Let's allow this bill to go to second reading so we can have public

debate." The reality is that the government would carry the bill because they have the majority at the other end. If you were to vote against this bill today, at second reading at private members' hour you would have a chance of killing it, because there are some Tories who are voting against it, and we could muster our members into this House in order to try to kill this bill at private members' hour. But you're playing politics with this. You're allowing this bill to go through the second reading process so you can get it into committee and play politics with what's going on in the cities of Ottawa, Vanier, Nepean, Gloucester, Kanata and others. I think that's wrong. I think you have to take a position — I don't know what the Liberal position is any more. But I believe you should take a position.

I understand the Tories. If the Tories are voting for this, they're being consistent. They believe in Bill 26 and they believe in a forced amalgamation. Ideologically I disagree with the position of the Tories, but I respect them because it is a principled stand.

New Democrats are saying the same as before: We don't believe in forced amalgamation; we believe in local solutions. We believe the municipalities should drive the process and it should be their decision and then they should come to us and ask us to pass the enabling legislation with the result.

But what's happening over here is that my friends in the Liberal caucus are taking a position where they say, "Oh, megacity; people are opposed to it. We're opposed too." Then in Ottawa they figure that people are in support, so they're saying, "We're in support, too." They're playing both sides of this issue.

I predict that the minute the commission comes down with the work it's doing to force this amalgamation, the people in the Ottawa region are not going to be in favour of the imposition of what the commission's report is going to do.

I also want to know one thing. Where's Dalton McGuinty today, the leader of the Liberal Party? Where's Dalton McGuinty? He's a member from Ottawa and I would expect that the Liberal leader, the principled individual that he is —

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Ottawa Centre on a point of order.

Mr Patten: It's out of order for any member to identify any other member as to whether they're here or not. I'd ask him to withdraw that comment.

Mr Bisson: Mr Speaker, he is right. I am against the standing orders and I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker: Yes, it is unparliamentary.

Mr Bisson: I cannot say that a member is not present and I won't, but the point is, I would like to see where the leader of the Liberal Party is going to be on this issue. He's not in the House. I hope they're rushing him to the House as we speak so he can take a position in not only representing his community but being the leader of the Liberal caucus on this particular issue.

That's one of the things that bothers me. I've got to go back to this point. I disagree fundamentally with a number

of the issues that the Tories are doing as a government. I fundamentally disagree with what you're doing with the tax cut, what you're doing with amalgamation and what you're doing with a number of other things, but at least you're consistent. At least you guys stand for something and you're going forward. I believe we have a principled position as well. At least it's a position. The Liberals in this case are demonstrating yet again that whatever way the wind blows, that's the way the Liberal Party is going to vote and it has absolutely nothing to do with a principled position.

I repeat, the issue here is simply this to me: Should the process be driven locally or should the process be driven by the Legislature of the province of Ontario? I vote for the people; I vote for a locally driven process where the communities themselves are able to come up with a process that they then bring back by way of referendum to their citizens so that the people in their community can decide, as they did in Timmins and other communities, when it comes to amalgamation, what the future of their community should be. That's what we should be doing.

When the process is finished and the local politicians have come to an agreement about what they think is right, they should give the local people by way of a referendum the ability to support the deal or refuse the deal and allow democracy to take place because, as I believe, this process is government-driven in the end. The communities are not going to be able to come to an agreement because of the way this bill is structured. It's going to be an Ottawa-region-driven process and I think municipalities are going to be hard-pressed to come to a deal. You're going to shove amalgamation down the throats of the people of Kanata, of Gloucester and all those other municipalities which quite frankly I think will not be served well under one big city.

With that, Mr Speaker, I wish to thank you for this opportunity to debate on this most important motion.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Kingston and The Islands on a point of order.

Mr Gerretsen: I think it ought to be said, in light of what was just stated by the last member, that the major difference is that the Toronto municipalities did not want it —

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order.

The Chair recognizes the member for Ottawa-Rideau for his two minutes.

Mr Guzzo: Let me say in the final two minutes, since we're going to maintain the rules now, to the speaker from Cochrane South that when it comes to local decisions, I commend you for your consistency. The last changes to the RMOC Act were made under your government, the Rae government. You took the mayors off regional council: No consultation; done here and imposed like a dictator. You stand up here today and lecture anybody on consistency? You're a fraud — not the biggest fraud I've seen, but you're a fraud.

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the member for Ottawa-Rideau to withdraw that term, if you would, please.

Mr Guzzo: Do you want me to say he is the biggest fraud I've seen? No, you don't want me to comment. I apologize. You weren't in that cabinet. The man who did it is playing golf on the Rideau lakes when he isn't on Bay Street practising law these days.

As far as the referendum in Nepean is concerned, let me make one quick point. Read the question that they voted 84% for. Did it ask if they wanted 12 city halls? Did it ask if they wanted a reduction? No. Read the question, please.

I want to say, if I might, to the Minister of Environment, my colleague from Carleton, I thank him for his comments and for coming here this morning. To the members for Ottawa East, Ottawa West and Ottawa Centre, I commend them for the same vision and the same opportunity that I recognized in the early 1970s from the then mayor of Eastview. I think it's time we move ahead. I think we give them five months in this bill.

As far as the conditions suggested by the member for Ottawa East, I'm in agreement and I accept them. I look forward to the submissions at the committee.

1100

TAXATION

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the tax burden on middle-class families should be reduced.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): In accordance with the rules, the member has 10 minutes.

Mr Hardeman: I want to start off by saying that a number of years ago, when we started the campaign for bringing forward the Common Sense Revolution and suggested to people that it was a platform that would benefit Ontario, I knocked on a lot of doors in Oxford county and I talked to a lot of the people. One of the things that kept coming forward was that the people believed they were overtaxed, in fact, not just by the provincial government but by all levels of government. They were paying taxes beyond their capabilities and they were not getting value for money. They did not believe that the government was spending the money wisely. They felt they could spend that money far better than the government could.

These people who we were talking to were 90% lower-middle-income people in Ontario. These are the people who work for a paycheque and who will spend that increase in their paycheque when taxes are reduced. These are the small business owners in the province of Ontario and the entrepreneurs; the people who create and, incidentally, do most of the new jobs in the province.

There is a myth that small business people have a lot of money and they don't need any assistance. I want to point out that this is a myth. Stats Canada says that entrepreneurs earn a median salary of \$15,000 less per year than a median of the employees in the same households. Incidentally, to achieve that they must work 13 hours a week more.

I suggest that, as we heard from the people, the question has to be, why did the people feel this way? I guess it's fair to say that the total tax burden in Ontario, including the taxes levied by all provinces, is among the highest in the Dominion of Canada, and it has increased faster than the national average; in fact, between 1981 and 1993 it increased from 31.8% of GDP to 37%.

I want to point out that high tax rates contribute to weak economic performance by cutting into the consumers' purchasing power, reducing the incentives for entrepreneurs and making it more difficult for firms to attract and keep highly skilled employees.

To explain that, we have to look at the past. In the 10 years prior to that visit to the households, taxes had been increased in Ontario 65 times. Between 1990 and 1992, taxes were raised 14 times. Despite these increases, Ontario's tax revenues decreased, not increased, by \$2.1 billion and Ontario's economy lost 300,000 private sector jobs. Between 1995 and 1998, prior to last Tuesday's budget, our government has decreased taxes 30 times. Tax revenues have increased, not decreased, by \$3.3 billion, with Ontario's economy creating 339,000 private sector new jobs. I think that points out that tax cuts stimulate the economy, create jobs and promote confidence and spending. This boost to economic growth also boosts tax revenue.

In Ontario, private sector employment rose by 268,000 since the tax cut of July 1996, and by 261,000 jobs in the last 13 months. Ontario leads the country in job growth. In the last 13 months, 60% of the private sector jobs created in Canada were created in the province of Ontario.

When the plan of tax reduction and job creation was started, there were some people who were somewhat sceptical as to whether this approach would work. I just want to point out that I had a number of people in my office requesting examples of where this approach had worked. At that time, a number of examples had to be used that had been done in other jurisdictions outside Canada. I'm happy to say that today we can use the example of what has happened in Ontario. In fact, we are a shining example of how reducing taxes can create jobs and create consumer confidence. In return, as more people are working, more confidence is created, more people are working — it's an ever-revolving circle — and we have economic growth.

The example of real economic growth in Ontario last year was 4.4%. I think this would prove that the process is working. When you leave people with more money in their pockets, particularly middle-income people, it tends to encourage them to spend that money, in turn creating more jobs.

Incidentally, going through the figures of Tuesday's budget, I was happy to read that in Oxford county, for the people I represent, the tax reductions, when fully implemented in July, will mean \$35.5 million more in the constituents' pockets. That will also mean \$35.5 million in the economy of Oxford county. I think this highlights the importance of reducing taxes on middle-income families.

I just want to point out the reason for my resolution. I think it's important that we have a position put forward that would be supported by everyone in the House, including the Liberals and the NDP. As we go over the debate that has gone on here for a number of months, we hear suggestions, first of all from the Liberal Party, that if they were to be put in the position that the provincial government is in now, they would not reinstate those taxes. From that, I must assume they feel that reducing the taxes on middle-class families in Ontario is an appropriate tool to use to bolster the economy and to make life better for all the people of the province.

I hear from the New Democratic Party at great length that reducing taxes would be an appropriate approach if it affected middle-class people, but their concern is that it is going to the higher-income as opposed to the middle-class and lower-class people in the province. I would suggest that this motion, on that basis, would also be supported. Looking at that, I hope we could ask for their support on the motion.

In the few moments I have left, I would just like to read into the record a couple of statements that were made just recently related to the tax cuts in the budget that was presented on Tuesday.

"Salesman John Janisse, 34, agrees 'absolutely' with the tax cut. 'I'll be buying a new Chrysler vehicle this year,' he said while shopping at the Devonshire Mall Tuesday. 'It's not so much the amount of extra money in your pocket, it's the economy overall.'"

Another comment: "The general manager of the Devonshire Mall (Doug Wolfe) said a psychological boost from a tax cut fuels the retail sector. 'We're seeing the effects of that confidence. We've had a steady growth of 5% to 7% per year over the past couple of years.'"

And last: "Any tax cut will be a good thing. Lower taxes gives us more money to spend and that stimulates the economy, you know." That was a comment made by a group of seniors in Windsor as they were shopping.

I would point out that it is not only my opinion that tax cuts work but in fact a lot of people's in our economy.

Again, I would ask all the members of the House to support the resolution to give a tax break and to continue the tax breaks that the province has been putting forward for the majority of the people of the province of Ontario.

110

Mr Frank Mclash (Kenora): First of all, I'd just like to congratulate the member for Oxford for bringing this resolution forward. If I've ever seen apple pie and motherhood in this House, this is certainly it this morning. At the outset, I would just like to say that I will certainly be supporting it.

However, I did notice that when the member indicated a number of quotes he has received on the budget, there was nothing there from northern Ontario. I would just invite him to go into northern Ontario and take a look at some of the quotes that were created around the budget up that way.

I have to say I would have been much more enthused had the resolution included that the House also call upon

the Harris government to cut the \$37 vehicle registration tax that the Harris government imposed on northerners in the last budget. It would have been probably a lot more attractive had he maybe attached that to his resolution as well, because he knows that I'm from a constituency made up of middle-class taxpayers and middle-class earners in terms of the entire constituency.

I must say as well that the folks up north don't mind paying what they consider their fair share of taxes. I've heard that many times. But I guess the real concern I find from my constituents is, are they getting the return on the value of the taxes they are actually paying?

Again, there's a very closely knit group of middle-class constituents throughout northern Ontario. I have one community in particular, the community of Ear Falls. They're middle-class taxpayers; they're all hardworking people. But today they don't have a doctor in their community; they don't have a clinic in their community. Both have been taken away from them. They're saying: "Yes, we pay our fair share of taxes. Should we not expect this kind of health care as a middle-class taxpayer?" Again, who could not agree with a reduction in taxes, but I must remind the member that we have an obligation to those citizens in a community like Ear Falls who don't have medical services.

The member will remember that I asked the Minister of Health a question just the other day regarding psychiatric services in northwestern Ontario, in northern Ontario. We have at the present time psychiatric patients who are being locked up in jail. Again, is this a fair return for them as people who are needing medical services in northwestern Ontario? When I listen to my friend over there talk about middle-class wage earners, they're expecting the services as well.

I go back to the Common Sense Revolution, that famous document where Mr Harris made a great number of statements. One of the statements he made was that there was only one level of taxpayer out there, there was only one taxpayer, and any actions they would take would not result in an increase to local taxpayers. I'd like the member to go up to some of my communities and tell people that, people who are facing greater user fees when they take their kids down to the recreation centre, who are facing tuition fee hikes unseen in this province before when they send their children off to post-secondary education.

Again, I guess the biggest slap in the face that we've seen from this government is the return of the vehicle registration fee. At least we had a government before that saw the uniqueness of northwestern Ontario and northern Ontario when it came to that fee. We don't have public transportation in northwestern Ontario as you would have here in Toronto, as you have in other major centres — the Golden Horseshoe, Ottawa. We don't have that. We pay prices for gas that you would not believe throughout northern Ontario and northwestern Ontario, gas prices that are always a great amount higher. At least at one point that was being recognized.

For Mike Harris to turn around and say, "No, we're not going to recognize that any longer. We're not going to recognize the long distances that you travel in northern Ontario. We're going to ask for that \$37 back" — again, that's something I would have liked this member to have in his resolution, recognizing that these are middle-class taxpayers who are paying that, along with the many user fees that I've mentioned.

When we come to the local taxpayer, take a look at what the Harris government did in terms of dumping \$650 million in provincial services on to the backs of the local taxpayer. That's coming through to the local taxpayer in that they now have to pay for social housing, for their policing costs and a number of other services that used to be paid for through the provincial tax system. Now it's dumped on to the local middle-income taxpayer. I go back to Mr Harris's statement, who always said there was only one level of taxpayer, and we're certainly seeing them being hit.

Another group of people I see suffering because of this government — and a good number of them could be middle-class taxpayers — are of course seniors and some of our disabled. Go back to some of the statements made by the present Premier before he became Premier. He indicated very clearly that aid for seniors and the disabled would not be cut, but today we have \$225 million in new user fees in terms of the Ontario drug benefit plan.

I ask the member for Oxford, where does he see that group fitting in? Where does he see them, now having to pay that additional \$224 million in new user fees imposed by his government, by his Premier, by his Minister of Health, on to folks I would consider as middle-income taxpayers?

We also remember this party suggesting to the middle class that classroom funding would be guaranteed. Well, in any school I go into, one of the major concerns in that school from the front-line workers — the teachers, as well the parents, the parent councils — is that classroom funding isn't there. It's not in the classroom. They're not getting that. We're talking about the middle-class taxpayers getting their dollars back. They're just not.

When we have 22 school boards cancelling junior kindergarten because of the Harris cuts, when we have 53 school boards — this was brought to my attention yesterday in Dryden when I was speaking to a grade 10 history class. They said, "What about the elimination of special education within the school boards?" their school board in particular. I had to tell them, "Yes, 53 school boards in the province now face great difficulty." I am talking of middle-class people in northwestern Ontario, in Dryden, for example.

The elimination of adult education: If we know of anything that is important to the middle class, it would be courses to enable them to move ahead, courses they could take in the evening as an adult. Some folks may be collecting employment insurance at the time, looking for these courses — again, eliminated.

I go back to something I hear often, and it's something I am sure every member in this House will hear as we move

through the summer and get closer to September, and that is the increase in the tuition fees. A middle-class wage earner, trying to send two or three, possibly four children at one time — we have a member in the House who has four children attending post-secondary education. That's hurting the middle-class taxpayer.

Who could disagree with this resolution? I certainly will be supporting it, but I must caution the member that there are many unique aspects of northern Ontario and northwestern Ontario that he might want to study and encourage his Premier and the cabinet to take a very close look at. I can tell you, the quotes you gave us today out of some of your newspapers in your area or in southern Ontario are not the quotes you'll find in newspapers from northwestern Ontario, because that budget did not sell to my constituents, to my middle-class taxpayers in northwestern Ontario.

Mr Speaker, on that note, I would like to thank you for the time I have taken here this morning.

1120

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I appreciate the opportunity to rise this morning and put a few thoughts on the record re this piece of business before us, this resolution by Mr Hardeman.

I say at the outset that I don't think there is anybody in this province who would disagree that the middle class in Ontario has been put-upon, has been hard-done-by and punished over the last 10 or 15 years when it comes to carrying the freight, carrying the mail for all the things we do together as a community and that they should be given some relief, some assistance, some way of dealing with all that's coming at them and their families.

At first blush, who wouldn't support a resolution that says, "Let's give the middle class a tax break?" because that's indeed, in many ways, what they want. But it's never that simple; it's never as black and white as this government across the way would present it.

Even though I have great respect for the member putting the resolution forward this morning and don't want to impute motive in any way, I just can't find it in my heart — having lived under this government for the last two and a half years, having sat in this place and watched what they've done to all the services the middle class in this province have come to expect to be there to support them as they try to make a living and support their families and offer their families opportunities to participate actively in the economy and the life of this province — in all good conscience, to support this resolution.

It is cynical to the max; it's hypocritical to the max; it's more of the public relations pap we've come to expect from this government as they try to pull the wool over the eyes of the people of this province and say to them, "We are giving you a tax break; we are presenting to you a tax break," while at the same time they are whacking them every time they turn around with user fees, with copayments. With all the things going up, it is costing people, middle-class people in particular, more than they ever will realize in the tax breaks they will get by the tax scheme this government has put in place that will hammer the

communities and the people and the families of this province.

Let's go back a little way in the history of Canada and talk a bit about what it is that the tax system, which we have put in place together over a number of years, provides us and why it is that we've chosen, by way of the tax system, to support it in that way. Before I do that, though, I want briefly to be a bit more specific about what I'm presenting by way of the tax scheme and the reality out there.

On one hand, we're told we're getting a tax break, that we're getting a 30% cut in our taxes. Most middle-class Ontarians have not recognized that tax break in their paycheque, and if they have, as some people have said, it pays for no more than a cup of coffee or maybe a six-pack of beer every couple of weeks. It is so minimal and so insignificant when you compare it to the increase in user fees and copayments that the middle class in Ontario are asked to pay.

Look, for example, at the increase in tuition fees for any student going to college or university in this province over the last two and a half years, increases in tuition fees at the post-secondary level that are astronomical and massive in comparison to any other time. Let's have a look at the activity fees now that are being charged to students who go to secondary schools particularly across this province. There probably isn't a school any more that doesn't, when a student comes through their door, charge them somewhere around \$100 a year for activity fees. That's a user fee; that's a copayment; that's a cost to middle-class Ontario that wasn't there before this government took over and introduced its tax scheme.

Let's look at health care, the shift from institutional hospital care to the community that these folks are presenting to us now. Don't get me wrong: I think we need to go in that direction, that there are lots of plusses to more and more health care being done in the community. However, under this government, what's happening is even more subtle. Health care, in the way we've come to know it, was covered under a federal act that saw the government pay for most, if not all, of the procedures required — it will now be shifted to a home care program that is no longer covered by those acts and those regulations.

So we see a privatizing of health care that will continue to cost middle-class families in Ontario more and more to cover the costs of health care for themselves and their kids, not to speak of the ever-increasing cost incurred because of aging parents who need health care.

We only have to point at the cost of drugs for our senior citizens. That used to be free to senior citizens in this province. There's now what we call a copayment. As we all know, because we've said it so often in this House, the Premier, who was leader of the third party under the last government, used to say: "A copayment, a user fee, is a tax. It doesn't matter what you call it or how you look at it, it's still a tax."

The tax scheme that this government presents to us as a relief somehow for the middle class of Ontario, that the

member today is suggesting that we continue to support, is in fact a smoke-and-mirrors exercise that in the end is going to cost middle-class Ontarians and Ontario families more than it is costing them now, and they will get less service for that cost.

Let's look for a second at some of what's happening across the province.

Property taxes: In my own community of Sault Ste Marie, there was a statement made at the last council meeting that our property taxes are probably going to increase somewhere between 11% and 12% this year to pay for the download of services that this government has reneged on delivering, that this government has decided is more cost-effective to put on the shoulders of property owners across this province, who happen to be, for the most part, middle-class Ontarians. The reason you're not going to see a huge hue and cry in the immediate future in the Toronto area is that the middle-class families of Toronto, because they were able to politically persuade the government to give a little relief in the short term, have been bought off by way of a cash-managed solution for the moment. But don't be fooled, because it won't be long down the line when you will be hit as well, any of you who live in Ontario, not just small communities like mine that are being hit this year with 11% and 12% increases, but you will probably be hit with increases on a more massive scale.

New user fees: Travel immunization is no longer covered by OHIP. Women with no complications will be billed if they want more than two Pap smears a year. Pregnant women will be billed if they want more than one ultrasound during pregnancy. Ambulance rides to the hospital have gone up to \$45. The province changed rules to make it easier for municipalities to charge a wider range of user fees for everything from garbage pickup to emergency response. Some regions have adopted different policies such as user fees for fire department service, traffic accident responses, fire cleanup and safety inspections. For user fees for counselling of men who abuse their wives, fees range from \$1 to \$75 per hour.

In the Waterloo region, municipalities are charging an administration fee of \$25 for assisting an organization to obtain licences, \$25 for those applying to the Liquor Control Board of Ontario for a licensed outdoor patio. The charge for a copy of Waterloo's zoning bylaws and accompanying map goes to \$75 from \$50. Tax certificates in Waterloo go from \$20 to \$25. The charge for cheques returned NSF goes to \$20 from \$15.

In my own community of Sault Ste Marie, along with the property tax increase we're seeing an increase in the cost of a plot to bury your family member from \$395 to \$688. It even costs more to die in this province now than it did, under this government's tax scheme.

User fees for prescription drugs — I have already spoken about that.

On Manitoulin Island, there are increased fees for Boy Scout camps. In the Kingston area, sports facilities increase fees by 5%. Residents requiring approvals for patios, street closures, driveway widenings and other

items can expect to pay engineering fees of \$100. Home alarm system owners must register, with a \$100 fee. The list goes on and on.

It's interesting when you put this in the context of the history of this country and how a few years ago a Liberal government in Ottawa, under the stewardship and guidance of then Prime Minister Trudeau, thought it would be in the interest of all Canadian citizens that we have first-class health care in this country that covered everybody from sea to sea to sea and that the government, through its tax system, would pay for that. He knew that this country and this province was strong enough, had the industrial integrity, to support that kind of program. He also knew that if you brought in a well-delivered and financed health care system that provided supports to all the people in Ontario, it would be economically an advantage as well. We have come to know, by the studies that have been done, that one of the reasons that industries come to invest in Canada and Ontario is the benefit derived from the fact that we have a health care system that provides health care for all of its citizens.

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We know the comparators that have been done of industries in the United States having to pay for health care for its workers compared to what industries in Ontario and Canada pay for its workers. The difference is significant. That's one good reason industry decides to choose Canada and Ontario as places to invest.

Mr Trudeau, with the support of people like Tommy Douglas, a well-known New Democrat in this country who started medicare in Saskatchewan, decided this would be good for the whole of the country, and Ontario as a province bought into that.

It's interesting that not long after that, along comes a Conservative government in Ottawa which decided that industry and the wealthy were paying too much to make sure that we all benefited from a first-class health care system, a first-class education system and some social structures that were valuable to everybody. They began a process of dismantling the tax system that would shift the cost of programs, the cost of doing business, the cost of quality of life in this country and this province more and more away from those who could actually afford it, those who were more well-off, shift it from the shoulders of industry and business on to the shoulders of the middle class.

That's why the middle class in Canada and Ontario today are creaking under the weight of the cost of all these programs, because the tax system in place is not fair, is not progressive. It's not cognizant of who's making the profit and making the money in this province. It is overwhelmingly being more and more put on the shoulders of those who can least afford it.

Then you get the Conservative government of Ontario over the last two and a half years, which has taken what was already a bad system and made it even worse through the tax scheme it's presenting and justifying by way of some of the comments Mr Hardeman has made here in the House this morning, which some of our Liberal colleagues

have supported, which we believe will, if it's allowed to go much further, diminish the level of very important infrastructure: health care, education, roads, our ability to do research and development, and so many other things that we collectively in this country have found ways to fund through our tax system. It will in the not-too-distant future diminish our ability to continue to support and to have those things in place.

Will that create more jobs? Will that make for a better economy? Will that make for a situation where the middle class and their families in this province will be better off? I daresay that is not the case. Talk to the middle-class constituents in your area, Mr Hardeman, and I say that to every other member in this House, and ask them how they feel today about their future: Are they confident? Do they feel there's a stability out there that they can count on by way of the systems that we've all taken for granted? I suggest they'll tell you overwhelmingly no, that they're feeling more and more uneasy, that there's somebody in their family or their neighbourhood or their circle who no longer feels comfortable that there is a future for them. They're working in contract positions in short-term opportunities, and the opportunities that used to be there that were to some degree supported or paid for by the tax system we had in place are quickly disappearing. What has been put in its place? A market system that is Darwinian in nature. Yes, we'll see the survival of the fittest, the survival of the richest, the survival of those who are better placed, and a diminishing of the opportunities for those who are less well-off. I suggest the less well-off in this province are becoming a larger and larger group and —

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. Further debate?

Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre): I'm very pleased to address this resolution.

Prior to the last election, the economy and people of this province were under a dark cloud, a cloud created by 65 tax increases dumped on the taxpayers of this province by the Liberals and NDP. It was a depressing cloud: It depressed initiative, it depressed risk-taking, it depressed hard work, it depressed ambition. It drove hundreds, perhaps thousands, of taxpayers underground and it exhausted the rest. Ontarians were fed up with having to pay gross amounts of taxes to four levels of government which, for the average family in my riding, amounted to close to 65% of their total family income, including income taxes, property taxes, gas taxes, sales taxes, parking lot taxes, large building taxes, tire taxes, business filing taxes, excise taxes, probate taxes, land transfer taxes. If you want to go out and buy a new car, you pay sales tax, air-conditioning tax and even a tax on the size of the engine.

There are more. I could go on but I see the Liberal members' eyes lighting up.

Many of our talented, creative entrepreneurs pulled up their roots and left Ontario to pursue their fortunes in New Brunswick, Alberta, South Carolina, New Mexico. In other words, they went to lower-tax jurisdictions. They

packed up their energy, their ideas, their entrepreneurial spirit and they left. Perhaps most disastrous of all, they took jobs and the potential for more jobs with them. Others decided not to work. I don't mean low-income people and those on social assistance; I'm talking about well-off entrepreneurs who simply gave up their ventures because they didn't see the potential return for their risks and their labours.

Some of my own neighbours asked me, "Why should I work for Bob Rae?" Others worked less because they were completely de-motivated, because even if they got a promotion with a raise, the difference it made to their take-home pay was absolutely minimal. Even if they worked overtime for a family vacation or new school clothes for their children, it made little difference to their paycheque after the high taxes were deducted.

In fact, before our government came to power, I knew many families who had combined incomes over \$100,000 who found it impossible to save money for a family vacation where they could spend some quality time together, or for post-secondary education for their children. That's what this is about. It's about quality of life.

High taxes and the demands that businesses have been forced to put on employees to produce more for less just so they could keep up with the high business taxes have been eating away at the quality of life for Ontarians and their children for years.

My constituents, thousands of them, get on the QEW or the GO train every morning, every workday, in the dark, and work hard all day, many through their lunch-hour. They come home in the dark exhausted, many bringing work with them.

What's been the result of all this? For five years, starting in 1990, the NDP were the government of Ontario and in those five years the number of people employed in Ontario did not increase, and yet the population was growing. Ontario clearly was heading backwards.

On the other hand, in the past 12 months alone, from February 1997 to February 1998, there have been 265,000 net new private sector jobs created in Ontario, the greatest record of job creation in one year in the history of this province. I hope everyone would agree that a job is the best thing that can happen to a family wracked with financial and emotional troubles caused by unemployment.

Between 1995 and 1998 our government decreased taxes 30 times, and our budget proposes 36 more tax cuts. The reason? Tax cuts create jobs. They stimulate the economy. They promote consumer spending. Lower taxes mean more money in household budgets for family outings, for education planning, for the little extras, or a breather from debt at the end of the month. Most of all, what the tax cuts have done is given people optimism — the optimism that comes from the feeling that they have greater control over their finances, that they aren't just working for the government, that they're working for themselves and for their families.

It's a feeling of empowerment that comes from knowing that the days when four governments can raise their axes, confiscating the majority of the fruits of their labour

without their agreement, are over. For many families in Ontario there was too much month left over at the end of the money, and it should have been the other way around.

Personal tax cuts mean there is extra money in their pockets, creating the opportunity for them to pay off debts sooner, increasing their net worth, future savings and buying power. This means lower stress on families and a more secure environment in which to raise children.

Our government is giving every Ontario taxpayer a tax cut. As of July 1, 1998, provincial income taxes will be eliminated for 655,000 modest-income individuals and families. The hard-hit, middle-income earners who make between \$25,000 and \$75,000 a year will receive the largest share of the tax savings at almost \$3 billion a year, money which they will put back into our economy, creating more jobs.

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Our government's income tax cuts mean that a two-income family with two children and a net income of \$37,000 would save \$2,810 a year, while a two-income couple with two children and a net income of \$60,000 would save a total of \$3,550 in Ontario tax — their money for their priorities.

We also know that there are too many children leaving for school in the morning from an empty house and coming home from school at the end of the day to an empty house because their parents work such long hours just to keep the family afloat.

In this budget, we've introduced a tax credit for working families of up to \$1,020 for each child under the age of seven. This supplement for working families both recognizes their efforts and eases the financial pressure for those parents who have wished they could have stayed home with their children in their formative years.

Yesterday we announced child care initiatives that will triple the number of children who benefit from child care assistance to an estimated 450,000 children. This will enable more families to balance the demands of work and home more easily.

These are the people who are benefiting from the Common Sense Revolution, the people who work hard, live by the law, trying to save for their future and their children's future and trying to enjoy a better quality of life today.

These are the people who understand that out-of-control spending by governments has to stop if we are to preserve everything we hold dear. They understand that the \$9 billion a year Ontario was paying just on interest on debt in 1995 is much like the interest they must pay when they carry a debt on their own charge cards. That interest on onerous debt is what prevents parents from being able to afford a new pair of track shoes for their son or daughter to go to school with, or an evening out with their family, just as the interest the province was obligated to pay when we first took office prevented us from spending the kind of money we would have loved to spend on health care and education.

The tide is turning. Today we continue to chip away at the deficit — it's well over half gone — and to lower

taxes for Ontarians. As a result, we are all starting to enjoy brighter days.

The promise is even brighter still. There is no question that the tax burden on Ontario families has to be lowered. Ontarians' freedom, feelings for personal gain, their ability to be independent, their ability to provide for the future and the ability to enjoy the quality of life they so richly deserve depend on it.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I will be delighted to see tax relief in the form of user fees being reduced for members of the middle class, user fees which have gone up tremendously.

I have now counted 264 tax increases by this government. You say, "How could that possibly be?" That could be this way: Mike Harris, when he was just leader of the Conservative Party and was not the Premier, told me and everybody in Ontario that a user fee is a tax. I believed him on that occasion and when he said that I applauded him. The member for Kingston and The Islands was in full applause at that.

I was just going through it. That's all I could find. I only found 264 tax increases since the Mike Harris administration took office. There are probably more but I found that many. As I say, if you follow what Mike Harris said, and I know you all do on the other side, you would know that a user fee is the same as a tax, because Mike said that, and I agreed with Mike on that particular occasion.

So, if the member is talking about reducing user fees, then I would say he's probably on the right track. User fees tend to hit the middle class. If he's talking about property taxes, as he would know, being a municipal individual, there was a huge downloading on municipalities of financial responsibilities. As a result they've had to either cut their services — again, services which largely benefit the poorer people, the people who are not as well off, and the middle-income people rather than the rich people — or implement significant increases in user fees or increase property taxes. That really does not take into account a person's ability to pay. If you are a very wealthy person — I won't mention names, as I sometimes do — then it doesn't matter that much if there are user fees, because you can afford those user fees.

If I were the member for Scarborough Centre, Mr Newman, I might think that's a good idea, but I am not he. Mind you, he had a good resolution in this House a while ago, because when he talked about tax decreases, he was talking about targeted ones; instead of one large one, he was talking about targeted ones.

I was listening to the chief economist for the Royal Bank and the chief economist for the Bank of Montreal, who both dismissed as nonsense this contention that the provincial income tax cut had any perceptible influence on the Ontario economy. In fact, they said it was the low interest rates in the US, which have that economy booming, and the low interest rates in Canada which are helping us out, and the low Canadian dollar, which really helps our exports. They said: "You want to know what's really making the difference? That's what is making the

difference." I agree with those two. They're neutral. They're people who certainly aren't going to be arguing on behalf of the opposition.

I went through some of the user fees as well. You think of provincial parks, the average person trying to go to a provincial park. Conrad Black can afford these increases, but others may not be able to afford them. We have various tourist attractions that one has to go to, the St Lawrence Parks. In education there have been some; in environment and energy there have been some; in natural resources there have been some. There have been all kinds of user fee increases.

I know that's what my friend who proposed this resolution was worried about: those user fees being caused by the Mike Harris government. That's why I appreciate his resolution. Listen, that's why I'm going to support it, because I think we've got to cut these user fees and these property taxes.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: That's what I said. I thought, "Well, he has got a good idea there." But it really means, then, that the Mike Harris government is going to have to assume the responsibility it has refused to have.

I was thinking of kids playing hockey. In St Catharines, they were telling me that to play on an all-star team or a travelling team it now costs \$1,000. Even in a house league it's \$250 to \$300. That's okay for people who have money, but it isn't okay for lower-middle-income and lower-income people. But that's what happens in Mike Harris's Ontario. Just as we see in the United States a greater polarization between the very rich and the very poor, we're seeing that here in Ontario.

I've been listening to the arguments that have been put forward by the member and I keep thinking of those tuition increases. Now the government is going to allow universities to deregulate certain tuitions. The debt burden, the debt load on these middle-income people who have to write the cheque for their kids to make up the amount needed for tuition and other costs — because of course you're ending rent control, so those students are going to have to pay more money when they rent.

All kinds of costs are going up in Mike Harris's Ontario. If you're very wealthy, you don't worry too much about that, because you got your big income tax cut, an income tax cut which in actual dollars benefits the wealthiest people in this province. So I'm all for lowering those user fees, and I think the member is on the right track if he's talking about that.

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Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I'm extremely pleased to be able to respond to the motion put forward by the member for Oxford, "that in the opinion of this House the tax burden on middle-class families should be reduced." To hear the member for St Catharines so enthusiastically supporting this motion, he being a Liberal I'm very, very pleased to see that kind of support.

I'd just like to quote a little bit from the Fraser Forum in their July 1996 edition. They point out that in 1996 here in Ontario the average family, which I understand make

somewhere around \$55,000, would be paying \$29,450. That's way over 50% of their income going to taxes and it's just about time that something was done about that. That's extremely unfair.

I think it's interesting to note also, on page 8 in this report, the change in the tax freedom day. That's the day when all your income has gone for taxes and you can get an opportunity to start spending something on yourself. In 1985 it was May 25 and in 1990 it moved to June 21. I always thought that tax-and-spend were the Liberals and the NDP, but it only moved five days from 1990 to 1995. So what I understand from that is that the Liberals are the tax-and-spend and the NDP are the spend-and-borrow, because that's when our debt doubled. So just reading this helps to clarify and understand the different parties in opposition.

On page 9 it talks about tax rates and the percentage of taxes based on income. It's interesting to note again that it reconfirms this: From 1985 to 1990 that figure moved from 39.5% to 47.1%. That's when the Liberals were there, the tax-and-spend party. But it only moved 47.1% to 48.3% when the NDP was there. That's the spend-and-borrow party. It's rather interesting to see these figures and they're here in hard, cold print if anybody wants to make reference to them.

Then there's a neat article on page 11. It talks about British Columbia. That's a province on the Canadian left coast. It says, "British Columbia is headed down a dangerous path." This was predicted in July 1996. When I was there in March this year, they didn't know I was a politician; they just knew I was there from Ontario. My, how they wanted to move to Ontario with what was happening in Ontario, just anything to get out of the Canadian left coast.

Then on page 12 I read, "when, during the recent BC election, both Premier Glen Clark and the Liberal leader, Gordon Campbell, promised to cut taxes or resign as Premier...." Just as you noticed in the last budget "Promises made, promises kept," out on the Canadian left coast that isn't true, and it's sort of consistent with socialist governments.

I think it's interesting to note that from 1965 to 1995, a period of three decades, the federal government revenue increased by 1,569%, direct taxes went up some 2,501% and indirect taxes increased by 975%. I'm sure you'll say, "What happened to inflation in that period?" To put it another way, the tax freedom day in 1961 was May 3. From there on, you could work for yourself. That has now moved to June 30 because of all the payroll taxes the federal Liberals have laid on us in the meantime.

Yes, we have cut taxes. Why are people saying, "Where is that tax cut?" It's because of all the payroll taxes that the federal Liberals have laid on and people can't identify. It's good that the Liberals keep talking about our tax cuts, because when you look at your pay stub, it's hard to find where that tax cut really is.

What happens with these high taxes to our middle-class people? From the early 1960s to now, we have tripled the underground economy. It's estimated that it has gone from

some 5% to 15%. That's the kind of thing that high taxes create. In a country like Puerto Rico, just to give you a different look, in 1987 they decided that they would cut their big, high income tax at 67.6% to 41%. Do you know what happened? The revenues increased that year by 28%; 30% more people were identifying the fact that they had income and they owned up to it. Most people, if the taxes are reasonable, want to pay their taxes, pay their fair share for their respective social programs.

There's no question that tax cuts are indeed a win-win. You create more jobs, you get more people working, there's more money coming in as revenue. As a matter of fact, the province of Ontario, from the 1994-95 budget till now, increased revenues by \$6 billion. Why? Because of the tax cuts that have stimulated our economy.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Oxford has two minutes.

Mr Hardeman: First of all I'd like to thank the members for Halton Centre, Algoma-Manitoulin, Northumberland and St Catharines for their kind words or their encouragement for the resolution and recognizing the problems that overtaxation for middle-class families in Ontario creates.

I also wanted to make a couple of comments. As the resolution was prepared and the statement I made in conjunction with that, we pointed out that overtaxation is not only a provincial problem; it is all the taxation that is going on that falls on the shoulders of the middle-class families, which of course includes, as the member for St Catharines aptly pointed out, municipal property taxes.

As I talk to our local constituents, they too are concerned with the level of taxation to their municipalities. I'm encouraged by the fact that a lot of municipalities in the last number of months and the last couple of years have been working very actively in trying to find ways of reorganizing and doing their administration and finding ways to deliver their services more cost-effectively and efficiently and in that way hopefully being able to reduce the property tax burden on their taxpayers.

I would wholeheartedly agree with the member that a tax transferred is not a tax reduced, and I think that the resolution points out that the intent of this resolution is that we want to reduce the taxation that is crippling and creating a great burden for the middle-class people of the province.

Again I would like to thank all the speakers who spoke in favour of the resolution and look forward to their support as we bring the resolution to a vote. Thank you very much for the time.

The Acting Speaker: I made a ruling earlier this morning when Mr Guzzo and Mr Baird — I recognized Mr Guzzo because he was on his feet first. I was reminded of the practice of this House that the member carrying the motion has 10 minutes at the beginning and two minutes at the end and that I should have changed, and did change, my recognition to Mr Baird. I felt that you deserved to know the reason for that change on my part.

TAXPAYERS SAVINGS
MUNICIPAL AMENDMENT ACT
(OTTAWA-CARLETON REGION), 1998

LOI DE 1998 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES MUNICIPALITÉS
AFIN QUE LES CONTRIBUABLES
RÉALISENT DES ÉCONOMIES FISCALES
(RÉGION D'OTTAWA-CARLETON)

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We will deal first with ballot item number 7 standing in the name of Mr Guzzo.

Mr Guzzo has moved second reading of Bill 9, An Act to amend the Municipal Act to provide Savings to Taxpayers in the Ottawa-Carleton Region.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will deal with this after we put the question on the next matter.

TAXATION

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We will deal now with ballot item number 8, private member's notice of motion number 3, standing in the name of Mr Hardeman.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be up to a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1200 to 1205.

TAXPAYERS SAVINGS
MUNICIPAL AMENDMENT ACT
(OTTAWA-CARLETON REGION), 1998

LOI DE 1998 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES MUNICIPALITÉS
AFIN QUE LES CONTRIBUABLES
RÉALISENT DES ÉCONOMIES FISCALES
(RÉGION D'OTTAWA-CARLETON)

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Order. Ballot item number 7.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Barrett, Toby
Bartolucci, Rick
Boushy, Dave
Chudleigh, Ted
Cullen, Alex
Ford, Douglas B.
Fox, Gary

Hardeman, Ernie
McGuinty, Dalton
McLean, Allan K.
Miclash, Frank
Morin, Gilles E.
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.

Pettit, Trevor
Phillips, Gerry
Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Ruprecht, Tony
Sergio, Mario
Shea, Derwyn
Sheehan, Frank

Gerretsen, John
Grimmett, Bill
Guzzo, Garry J.

Parker, John L.
Patten, Richard

Sterling, Norman W.
Wettlaufer, Wayne

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the clerk.

Nays

Amott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Bisson, Gilles
Boyd, Marion
Galt, Doug

Kells, Morley
Martin, Tony
Newman, Dan
Saunderson, William
Silipo, Tony

Smith, Bruce
Tilson, David
Wood, Bob
Wood, Len
Young, Terence H.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 28; the nays are 15.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Pursuant to standing order 95(j), should this be referred to the committee of the whole House?

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): I'd ask, if I might, that it be referred to the standing committee on general government.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Guzzo has requested that it be referred to the standing committee on general government. Is this the wish of the House? It is agreed.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I wonder if you could explain, if the vote was 28 to 15, why there are more than 43 members in the House currently, because I believe that four members walked in before you decided how this matter should be disposed of.

The Acting Speaker: If you will allow me, there was one door inadvertently left open and that is why. We will wait for 30 seconds and the members will take their seats.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Those doors were not inadvertently opened.

TAXATION

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We will now deal with ballot item number 8, private member's notice of motion number 3, in the name of Mr Hardeman.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Bartolucci, Rick
Boushy, Dave
Bradley, James J.
Chudleigh, Ted
Cullen, Alex
Danford, Harry
Ford, Douglas B.
Fox, Gary
Galt, Doug
Gerretsen, John
Grimmett, Bill
Guzzo, Garry J.
Hardeman, Ernie

Kells, Morley
Leach, Al
Martiniuk, Gerry
McGuinty, Dalton
McLean, Allan K.
Miclash, Frank
Morin, Gilles E.
Munro, Julia
Newman, Dan
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Parker, John L.
Patten, Richard
Pettit, Trevor
Phillips, Gerry
Rollins, E.J. Douglas

Ruprecht, Tony
Sampson, Rob
Saunderson, William
Sergio, Mario
Shea, Derwyn
Sheehan, Frank
Smith, Bruce
Spina, Joseph
Sterling, Norman W.
Tilson, David
Tumbull, David
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wilson, Jim
Wood, Bob
Young, Terence H.

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): They ayes are 47; the nays are zero.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried unanimously.

The time for private members' business has expired. This House stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1213 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CHILD FIND

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I ask all members of this Legislature to join me in recognizing Child Find Ontario's Green Ribbon of Hope campaign during this month of May. The Green Ribbon campaign highlights the plight of missing, runaway, lost, kidnapped and abducted children in Ontario and in Canada.

Each year more than 50,000 Canadian children are listed as missing according to RCMP statistics. Needless to say, this issue is of serious concern to us all. Fortunately, with the support of the community and in partnership with law enforcement, customs and immigration officials, more than 90% of the children are successfully recovered.

Members of my caucus are wearing the Green Ribbon of Hope today as a show of support for Child Find Ontario's programs and services, which are carried out throughout the province by a team of 1,100 volunteers in 25 local Child Find chapters.

The services include working with everyone involved in the search for a missing child, quickly producing and distributing posters with photographs of missing children, alerting the public through TV and other media, providing emotional support to the parents, operating a 24-hour, toll-free national telephone line to collect tips and reports on missing children, and undertaking preventive measures by providing education on child safety to parents and children and by sponsoring programs like the Kid Check fingerprinting program and the All About Me Baby ID footprinting program for infants.

Members of this House, join me in acknowledging this particular day, and especially on May 25.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Could I ask members to remove their ribbons. In accordance with the Speaker's ruling, unless you have unanimous consent, they must be removed.

Mr Sergio: That's what I asked, Madam Speaker. I would be more than happy to ask for unanimous consent in order that we can wear the green ribbon.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Go ahead. Could you briefly explain —

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr Sergio: I'll be more than happy to try. This is with respect to recognizing the Child Find campaign which goes during the month of May and especially on May 25.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed then? Agreed.

Mr Sergio: I thank the House and the members.

LANDS FOR LIFE

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): My statement today is on the Lands for Life. There is a common refrain emerging from my riding of Cochrane North and indeed the rest of northern Ontario, and that is, "Scrap the Tories' Lands for Life process."

Over the legislative recess, I heard from hundreds of constituents regarding this issue. If anything, this Lands for Life debate has been remarkable in that it has been able to forge a consensus among many different groups of stakeholders.

On April 23, in Constance Lake, 1,000 residents attended the Boreal East public meeting. Several hundred people showed up at a similar meeting in Smooth Rock Falls the following day. A petition gathered over 1,400 signatures calling on the Conservative government to put an end to this folly.

The people of Cochrane North have real concerns with the process and the potential impact of Lands for Life. Indeed, one of your very own panel members said it best:

"One of the failures of the process is the time line. We don't have time to debate intelligently, only to react adversely. We are missing a great opportunity to get ideas. The MNR promised to deliver the socioeconomic impact but they couldn't deliver," and we haven't heard the results of that yet.

Over the weekend, the chairperson of the Lands for Life round table in northeastern Ontario stated, "I don't think anyone is endorsing any one of the five options," as outlined in the Lands for Life initiative.

You can't get it any clearer. Lands for Life should be shelved now.

MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): It's Mental Health Week in Ontario. There are over 350 community-based mental health programs in our province. Services for individuals include social rehabilitation, case management, crisis management, day care, self-help and clinic-based counselling.

These programs are intended to reduce the frequency and duration of admissions to psychiatric facilities, replace inpatient treatment with outpatient services and reintegrate patients back into a community environment.

In discussing the importance of mental health care in Ontario, I would like to recognize two outstanding mental health programs in my riding of Northumberland.

The community mental health centres in Campbellford and Cobourg play a vital role in Northumberland in improving the quality of life for people who require mental health services. These agencies are effective pro-

motors of mental health issues and in advancing mental health reform through the Northumberland County Mental Health Task Force.

I applaud Gene Duplessis and Brenda Weir and the rest of the staff at the Campbellford and Cobourg centres for their enthusiasm and initiative in developing activities and offering services in addition to the programs already provided.

Thanks for this opportunity to recognize Mental Health Week and the role that mental health programs play in our communities. Thank you for your attention.

TOURISM

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):

This week's budget stated that tourism was one of Ontario's most important industries, employing over 200,000 people. The government's going to invest \$120 million over the next four years, which is only \$30 million per year.

Ontario, as the speech went on, was once a leader in tourist promotion. That was until this Reform-Tory government cut the tourism budget of the province some three years ago.

Elaine Viner, chair of the Greater Kingston Chamber of Commerce, slammed her fist on the desk when Attorney General Harnick visited yesterday. She stated: "We need tourism dollars. They say it's a good news budget, but that's not good news and not good enough for us. I can't emphasize enough that Kingston desperately needs tourism funding."

In Kingston we have Fort Henry, the Thousand Islands, the general ambience of the city. None of these were mentioned in last week's budget speech by the finance minister.

The Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism is going to take a Yours To Discover Ontario tour within a week to decide where to spend the money, the Attorney General said, and this includes Kingston.

We don't need travel shows. What we need is the money. Give the money, the tourism promotion dollars, to the local organizations. They know how to spend it best. They know how best to spend the money to promote their own areas. Do that.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): On May 1 the Harris government took another swing at social assistance recipients, this time at families or single employable individuals living in accommodation owned or controlled by their parents.

These recipients are no longer entitled to a shelter allowance if they rent from a parent. They must seek accommodation elsewhere. But this government will still pay shelter costs, only to a different landlord. This is ridiculous. I believe the regulation violates the Human Rights Code which says you can't discriminate in accommodation based on family status.

Harvey and Penny Auger of Capreol rent a house to their son, his partner and two young children. They

recently wrote to Mike Harris about this change: "My wife and I are very disturbed by your government's new welfare strategy as of May 1, 1998. This is with little or no notice to inform welfare recipients that if they live in separate dwellings, but owned by their parents, they will have their May 1 cheque listed as board/rent, plus a \$50 living allowance. This reduces their normal amount to approximately 50%. Your reasoning is that you do not believe that the Ontario government should be making mortgage payments.

"How wrong you are, because as a parent and landlord we pay heat, hydro and repairs to the tune of approximately \$250 a month. This allows our son to live within your rent guidelines.

"We are proud as parents who have helped our son through a very difficult time. He is now going to Cambrian College for grade 13 upgrading and gets very high marks. This has allowed him to apply for an OSAP grant and go for a three-year technical instrumentation ticket next year. This should allow him to get into a strong new work field.

"If this is your idea of showing a new kinder and gentler government, you have sent our entire family the wrong message."

PRINCIPAL FOR A DAY PROGRAM

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): I want to tell you about something very special which I was invited to and took part in yesterday, the Principal for a Day program at Dixon Grove Junior and Middle School. I want to take this opportunity to thank Principal Collette Dowhaniuk, as well as the teachers and students who made my visit so enjoyable.

Dixon Grove has 63 staff members serving 865 students from over 33 countries, speaking more than 44 languages. Together, their mission statement, as outlined in the school's strategic plan, is to "recognize the diversity of individuals, to develop confident and responsible students who value learning and equality, and to teach in educational partnership with our community the skills required to be successful students.

During my visit, I toured the school, spoke with the students and listened closely to the thoughts teachers shared with me. We discussed the issues they face daily and the goals to produce the best possible students at Dixon Grove. Part of our discussion included ways to maximize spending in the classroom, and I know the dedicated teachers at Dixon Grove will be pleased to make use of the additional money for textbooks announced in the recent provincial budget.

I want to again thank everyone at Dixon Grove Junior and Middle School for their kind hospitality, and particularly the staff for their devotion to helping students reach their full potential.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview): I rise today to bring to the attention of the House the deep anxiety and

scepticism felt in the Ontario francophone community over Bill 108.

Bill 108 will give municipalities, by agreement with the Attorney General, more authority over the prosecution of some provincial offences. The problem is that the Attorney General is not willing to guarantee existing French-language rights.

The Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Ontario and the Canadian Bar Association, among others, have warned that the lack of legislative guarantees is not only unacceptable, but may in fact be unconstitutional. The municipalities, you see, are not covered by the French Language Services Act of Ontario and are therefore not required to provide services in French.

Over a decade has passed since a Liberal government in Ontario passed the French Language Services Act. Support for our francophone community remains strong. In a recent poll 77% of anglophones said Ontario should become officially bilingual. The government needs to send a clear signal to all of our country, not just Ontario, that they believe in equal rights. I will remind you that the Calgary framework, which the Premier signed, says, "Canadians are equal, enjoy rights under the law, and cherish diversity, tolerance, compassion, and equality of opportunity."

I urge the government not to abandon these principles and to adopt the amendment my party introduced a year ago. Remember that you have the legal and moral obligation to safeguard the rights of all Ontarians, including those who are French-speaking. They are no less citizens than the rest of us. Do not jeopardize their rights in your haste to download ever more services on to municipalities. Do the right thing and amend the bill now.

340

COMPENSATION FOR HEPATITIS C PATIENTS

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I wasn't here on Monday to participate in the debate that went on in this House about the issue of hepatitis C. I just want to put a few thoughts this afternoon in the time that I have. I am increasingly more disappointed and disgusted with the understanding and politics that surrounds this issue as each day passes.

I want to share with you a story from my own community. I think we should all be looking at the real human life issues that are involved in this piece of work. Mr Charles Duguay from Sault Ste Marie says:

"How has it changed my life you ask? Chronic fatigue and brain fog has altered my lifestyle dramatically. With reduced income, losing my liver, loss of balance, the government of Ontario and Canada refuses to compensate me and other victims of hepatitis C prior to 1986, even though a test was available and known to them in 1981. This is neither fair or compassionate, as recommended by the Krever commission. Being forced to retire 15 years early affects my ability to earn a living, look after my family, protect my assets and ability to get life insurance or a bank loan.

"Personally, I believe the whole issue is not one of compassion, but dollars. Myself and all victims of hep C have been violated by this system. The governments of Ontario and Canada should make an effort to help the people who, through no fault of their own, cannot function normally because of receiving tainted blood. Instead of asking for compassion, we should be asking for mercy, mercy as defined in the dictionary as 'kindness in excess of what might be expected or demanded by fairness; kind or compassionate treatment; relief of suffering.'"

WOMEN'S INTERVAL HOME

Mr Dave Boushy (Sarnia): I am proud to say that through the cooperative efforts of this government and the Seaway Kiwanis Club of Sarnia, construction of Women's Interval Home in my community is now well on the way.

Interval Home is renowned for the quality care given to abused women, and with this new facility, made possible by the Kiwanis Club land donation and our government's funding of about \$1 million, these essential services will continue on an improved site. This new site will be more than just a building, it will be a place of protection, of compassion and of caring.

We all know that violence against women is a devastating problem. I thank my colleagues for continuing to tackle this problem by offering support and escape to those who have suffered. Preventing violence is everyone's responsibility. With a compassionate community such as ours, working together as partners, I know we can take great pride in creating a society where women and children are safe in Ontario and in my riding.

VISITORS

Mr Dave Boushy (Sarnia): Talking about my riding, the blue water land, one of the most progressive communities in Ontario, where good, nice people live, I have in the west gallery, as my guests, some of those nice people, 50 of them, visiting Queen's Park. Thank you for welcoming them.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SMALL BUSINESS AND CHARITIES PROTECTION ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LA PROTECTION DES PETITES ENTREPRISES ET DES ORGANISMES DE BIENFAISANCE

Mr Wilson, on behalf of Mr Eves, moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 16, An Act to give Tax Relief to Small Businesses, Charities and Others and to make other amendments respecting the Financing of Local Government and

Schools / *Projet de loi 16, Loi visant à alléger les impôts des petites entreprises, des organismes de bienfaisance et d'autres et à apporter d'autres modifications en ce qui a trait au financement des administrations locales et des écoles.*

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Would you like to make a brief statement?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): The bill, if passed by this House, would help small businesses in Ontario to grow and create jobs by protecting them from large property tax increases. It would make such protection mandatory for all charities and it would give municipalities important new powers to make property tax reform in a fair and manageable way.

LOI DE 1998 SUR LE TRANSFERT DE PROGRAMMES ET DE SERVICES ET LES DROITS LIÉS AU FRANÇAIS

DOWNLOADING AND FRENCH LANGUAGE RIGHTS ACT, 1998

Mr Bisson moved first reading of the following bill:

Projet de loi 17, Loi confirmant que les droits liés au français ne sont pas touchés par le transfert de programmes et services provinciaux / Bill 17, An Act to confirm that French language rights are unaffected by provincial downloading.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Would you like to make a brief statement?

M. Gilles Bisson (Cochrane-Sud): Comme vous le savez, en 1987, l'Assemblée a adopté à l'unanimité un projet de loi, la Loi 8, qui a donné aux régions désignées dans la province les services en français, qui sont délivrés par la province. Ce que cette loi essaie de faire, c'est d'assurer dans le transfert de tous les services provinciaux dans les régions désignées, qui sont transférés aux municipalités, que la Loi des services en français y applique, et que les francophones ne perdent pas leur droit aux services en français.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTING

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to move a motion respecting the meeting time of the Standing committee on administration of justice without notice.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon Mr Sterling: I move that the Standing committee on administration of justice be authorized to meet today

following routine proceedings for the purpose of organization.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), Mr Johnson (Brantford) and Mr Fox exchange places in the order of precedence for private members' public business.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

1350

MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): On a point of personal privilege, Madam Speaker: I sent a letter to the Speaker's office yesterday on this. It's on my own behalf and on behalf of the member for Windsor-Riverside.

We believe that our privileges as members elected to this chamber by the people of our own constituency, plus in an indirect way by the people of the province, have been diminished by the fact that after attending a series of meetings across the province hosted by the Ontario Association for the Deaf, we wrote a letter to the Minister of Education — who is in the House today — on March 10 asking for a meeting to discuss the very important and critical issues presented to him at those meetings and to ask for some response so that we might help those citizens of this province deal with the massive changes that are being made to the way they get supported and helped in their efforts to better themselves and participate in the economy of this province. Sad to say, on April 24 a letter was sent out from the minister's office that he would in fact not meet with us.

I remind the Speaker that the member for Windsor-Riverside is the critic for our caucus on post-secondary education and the issues we wanted addressed are within that portfolio. Having previously been a parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education and Training and having chaired an advisory committee to the minister on deaf education, I have an interest in this as well.

We feel, as members of this place representing our constituencies, having listened to a very significant and large group of people around this province who are affected very directly by the unilateral changes — the way that deaf people in this province will now be supported in their attempts to get education has been changed. The minister has for all intents and purposes, by way of this letter, said, "I regret that the minister is unable to meet with you at this time."

I'm wondering if there's something you can do in your office to make sure that our privileges here to be present with the ministers who guide the deliberations of this

place — that we get to meet with them and talk with them about the issues of concern —

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Member for Sault Ste Marie, try to wrap up now.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I need to hear.

Mr Martin: — and not continue down this road of arrogance and high-handed —

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Sault Ste Marie, please take your seat. Minister of Education, briefly, please.

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): I fail to see how this is a point of order, but it's certainly a point of politics; there's no question about that.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Sit down. Member for Sault Ste Marie, take your seat. Order.

Hon David Johnson: Madam Speaker, since the member opposite has gone through quite a diatribe on this, I did want to let you know that on April 1, if the member is interested —

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I need to hear.

Hon David Johnson: — I did meet with the parents, teachers and students of E.C. Drury School for the Deaf in Milton and we had quite an excellent discussion that day. I was in Milton at the school, at a special fair, and we had quite an excellent meeting with regard to a number of issues around this very matter.

These meetings are ongoing and today my staff is meeting again with parents and teachers and students surrounding this very same issue. These meetings are taking place on a continual basis.

I meet with officials on education issues on a daily basis. Yesterday I met with school board officials, college officials, university officials, officials involved in skills training.

It just happened at that point in time my calendar was booked up and I was unable to meet with Mr Martin. I'm sorry that his nose is out of joint, but at that particular time, as it says in the letter, I couldn't meet with him. But I'm more than happy to meet with Mr Martin and anybody else on this matter, and I would suggest that the week after next, if Mr Martin has time, I would be more than happy to meet with him and discuss this, as I've met with any number of other people to discuss this matter.

The Deputy Speaker: Take your seat, member for Sault Ste Marie. This is not a point of privilege.

Mr Martin: On a point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Sault Ste Marie, let me rule on your point of privilege. It is not a point of privilege. The Speaker cannot compel anybody to meet with anybody. I thank you for raising the matter — the issue is an important matter — but I would suggest that you do get together. I heard the minister offer to meet with you, and I suggest that you now take him up on that and get together and resolve this matter.

Mr Martin: Madam Speaker, on a point of order: The comment that came from across the way in that corner over there sums it all up. When I asked why he wouldn't meet with me, they said, "Because you're nothing." I would like an apology —

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for London North, don't start telling the Speaker how to react to this, please.

That is not a point of order. Take your seat, please.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): Madam Speaker, on a point of order: I think what has got my friend here frustrated is the same comment that I heard coming from the deputy Deputy Speaker. It is the number of times during question period and other occasions where he hurls insults across the assembly. The comments that he made I would not want to repeat in this way, and I would ask the member —

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Cochrane South, I didn't hear the comment. I would give the member for Perth an opportunity to withdraw the comment if he did indeed say that.

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): I withdraw.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TUITION FEES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Education. Here in Ontario we have played by a rule that has been around for a long time. We've told our kids that if they just worked hard enough at school, they could be anything they want to be. That's not true any more. As a result of your changes next year, University of Toronto medical students are going to be paying \$11,000 a year in tuition fees. So now what we've got to tell our kids, apparently, is it doesn't matter how hard you work and it doesn't matter how smart you are; if your parents aren't rich, you can forget about that dream of becoming a doctor, a dentist or a lawyer.

Why have you now decided that in our province, Ontario, there is going to be an income test for our kids when it comes to realizing their dreams?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): Quite to the contrary. The announcement yesterday was an announcement to improve the quality, to improve the opportunities of our young people at the post-secondary level.

I have a letter here, for example, from the University of Western Ontario which says: "Western strongly supports your government's policy of turning over the responsibility for setting professional fees to our board of governors, and we will use the new responsibility in a way that improves the quality of education and protects access for students from all economic backgrounds."

I have a letter from Sheridan which says: "We would like to make special mention of the government's

commitment to quality and access. The resources generated in this way will go directly towards improving quality in the classroom."

The Deputy Speaker: Answer, please. Could you wrap up.

Hon David Johnson: That's what this whole program is about, improving the quality of education at our post-secondary level, improving the opportunities —

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister of Education. Supplementarily.

Mr McGuinty: I'm waiting now for the minister to stand up with letters that he has received from parents in our middle-class families, parents in our poor families and young people in this province, the thousands of young people with all their hopes and aspirations and dreams ahead of them, supporting what the minister has done when it comes to jacking up tuition fees in Ontario.

There are kids today in middle-income families who could very well become surgeons, who could find a cure for cancer. There are kids in poor families who could very well develop some kind of software program that creates thousands of jobs. You are robbing them of their potential. You are robbing this province of their potential.

1400

Since when have you decided that the amount of money you've got in the bank is now more important than your marks?

Hon David Johnson: Does the leader of the third party not have concern for the thousands of kids who are applying for various positions that are not available in the universities today — computer science positions, electrical engineering positions? They want careers. There are excellent careers in those programs but there are no opportunities today.

We are working in conjunction with the universities, with the private sector. This government will be investing \$600 million, over the next three years, of new money to assist post-secondary students. We are calling upon the participation of the private sector to create 17,000 new opportunities for our young people.

Mr McGuinty: You are shutting young people out of our universities; it's as simple as that, and this in addition to the problems already being experienced by students presently enrolled in Ontario universities.

We started a little postcard campaign. We got results in just from one of our universities, the University of Windsor. We asked the students presently enrolled in the University of Windsor to let us know what they've got by way of student debt right now. We got responses from 800 students that total \$7 million in debt. See this package here, \$1 million? This package here, \$1.4 million in student debt. This package here, \$791,000 in student debt? This package here, \$1.5 million in student debt? When did we decide that in this province it was all right to download the government's financial responsibilities for our universities on to the backs of our students?

Hon David Johnson: We are opening up more opportunities for our young people: 17,000 more opportunities.

But let's talk about support, because the member opposite has asked about support. In the budget was announced the Canada-Ontario millennium scholarship fund, \$9 billion; the opportunities trust fund, initiated by this government, \$600 million; the graduate scholarship awards announced in the budget on Tuesday, \$75 million; 30% set aside of any tuition increase. There is more money going to assist our post-secondary students than ever in the history of Ontario.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): My question is for the Minister of Education and Training. Your answer to every question we have asked about increasing tuition and increasing student debt is that you are increasing opportunities for students. The only opportunity you are increasing for students in this province is to go into greater and greater debt. You're making students pay for their opportunities.

On Monday I raised a concern about the kinds of fee increases Queen's University is considering, so let me remind you: Queen's University is planning an \$1,800-a-year increase in its fees for law, and a \$2,500-a-year increase in engineering fees. They are proposing a \$5,000-a-year increase for medicine. We are seeing other shocking proposals come forward, like Western's intent to raise the fee in orthodontics by \$8,000. Yesterday you gave a go-ahead for these kinds of increases.

Minister, do you not understand that these kinds of increases shut the door to these programs for students who have to borrow the money to go to school and who don't want to go into this kind of debt?

Hon David Johnson: An important part of this program, yes, is to increase opportunities for our young people, because many young people are being turned away from the kinds of programs they're qualified for, that they will be successful in and which our society needs.

The Canadian association of technology has indicated that there are some 20,000 positions going unfilled in our economy today in information technology simply because there are not opportunities at the post-secondary level to fill them, and that's what we're addressing. But the member opposite is also perhaps of the mistaken belief that the amount of loan that a student would be eligible to receive or a student —

The Deputy Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon David Johnson: — would take has gone up. The cap remains the same. The \$7,000 cap remains in effect. No undergraduate student will have to accept a loan beyond that. Anything beyond that will have to be in the form of direct assistance to our students.

Mrs McLeod: The issue here is what kind of debt our students are expected to bear and what kind of debt they can bear, and the issue here is who gets left out because their family isn't wealthy enough to help with the costs.

Let me give you an example of what these new increases can mean to a student putting herself through medical school at the University of Toronto. That student will have \$28,000 in debt from her undergraduate years. She will build up another \$28,000 in debt during medical school. The University of Toronto is now going to raise

the tuition fee for that medical school to \$11,000, which is an increase of \$6,200 a year. The university indeed has to give that student a loan, but that is added to her debt, so that student now leaves school with a debt of \$81,000, not including private loans, and your government says that is just fine.

Minister, do you really believe that a student who is on her own, whose family cannot afford to help, is going to take on a debt of \$81,000?

Hon David Johnson: The maximum debt that an undergraduate student can incur during any year, as the member opposite well knows, is \$7,000. That is the maximum. That has not changed. As a result of this program, which will permit more opportunity, 17,000 more positions, the cap on the debt has not changed.

In addition, this government has injected some \$600 million of new money over the next three years, some \$150 million to support doubling of electrical engineering, computer science, high-tech courses which are so in demand by our students which they're not having the opportunity to pursue under the present regime, \$135 million to match the Canada foundation innovation grant, access grants to various universities. We are plowing more money in to help more students.

Mrs McLeod: Minister, you know the caps; you just haven't learned to multiply. Four times seven is 28 — four undergraduate years — four times seven is 28 for four medical school years, and you've added \$25,000 that the university now has to loan that student for increased tuition. It adds up to \$81,000.

You have increased fees right across the board, a 60% increase in across-the-board fees under your government, and now you've said the sky is the limit for many other programs. Your only answer has been to say, "Let the universities give students a loan," so that the student can go into more and more debt to cover these increased costs. You have put no new money into student assistance, and the \$300 million your Minister of Finance talked about yesterday was old money from loan forgiveness put into a new fund called a grant — a new name and no new money. You have increased the amount of debt that every student has to carry, you've increased the amount of support parents are expected to give and you still expect students to carry more debt.

You cannot talk about accessibility, Minister, because you have shut the door to students who cannot afford to pay these exorbitant increases. Why are you putting signs on our university doors that say, "For the rich only"?

Hon David Johnson: Complete nonsense. A letter from the University of Toronto says:

"Last week, the University of Toronto adopted a new student financial aid policy which guarantees that no qualified student will be deprived of the opportunity to study at the University of Toronto due to lack of financial resources."

Our first requirement is, is a student qualified to pursue? If a student is qualified, then we will guarantee that the support is there for that particular student.

Mrs McLeod: They're going into debt. It's a loan. When you borrow, you have to pay back.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Fort William.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister without Portfolio): You didn't think of that when you were in government.

Hon David Johnson: My colleague says, "You didn't think of that when you were in government." When they were in government, with all the bleating we have today: 35% increase in student tuition. Now, at least —

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Could you wrap up, Minister?

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Hon David Johnson: Unlike the Liberals, who simply allowed a 35% increase, we are insisting that should the universities decide to increase, any tuition increase must go to improve the quality of the program at the university level and 30% of it must go to help those students who need help.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): In the absence of the Minister of Finance, I'll direct my question to the Minister of Education. I want to ask him about the biggest tax increase that middle-income and modest-income families in Ontario have ever seen. The government was very crafty. You waited until after the budget to announce your tuition fee increases, because if those tuition fee increases had been known before the budget came out, it would have blown your budget out of the water.

The reality of your announcement of tuition fee increases means that someone hoping to attend the University of Toronto medical school is just taking on a \$5,100-a-year tax hike. It makes it oh so clear how money your tax scheme is. Only the wealthiest people in Ontario will get a benefit of \$5,100 a year out of your tax scheme. The question is, since no one else is getting that benefit, how are modest- and middle-income families going to pay this new tax at which you've just assessed their children's education?

Hon David Johnson: Every student in need who is qualified for a post-secondary education will be guaranteed an opportunity. Not only will they be guaranteed an opportunity, but the opportunities will be much greater, some 17,000 new positions in high-demand areas.

Again, the message I have from all the universities and colleges which have contacted me today — such as the University of Toronto, which has said, "No qualified student" — regardless of their income — "will be deprived of the opportunity to study at the University of Toronto."

To ensure this works, we are putting more money into student assistance. This year, for example, some \$550 million is going to direct student assistance, the most in the history of Ontario.

Mr Hampton: What I'm hearing from you is this: You're going to jack up the tuition fees by \$5,000 a year. So you're going to put a tax of \$5,000 a year on the kind of education someone needs in this so-called new economy if they're to have a chance at getting a job or a vocation that has a future to it. You're going to put a tax on that.

When people say, "That's an unfair tax," you're going to say, "Well, take out a loan to pay the tax." That's the only financial alternative there is out there for young people: They have to go into debt. Where do you think the \$30,000 debt loads that students are carrying now came from? They came from your tuition increases, the 60% you've already increased tuition by.

Minister, I'm going to put it to you again. Saying to people who are already in debt, "Go get another loan so you can pay the tax increase," isn't the answer. What are you going to do for middle- and modest-income families which want to send their children to university and can't afford the tax hike?

Hon David Johnson: What the leader of the third party is hearing from me — unlike what the NDP did when the NDP was in office, 1990-95, when tuition fees went up by 50%. The NDP permitted universities and colleges to put tuition fees up by 50%. What did they get in return? Nothing. Nothing in return. What we're getting in return is more opportunities, 17,000 new positions, in conjunction with the private sector. We are plowing in \$600 million of new money. The private sector will be putting in new money. That's 17,000 new positions. We're also getting a better quality. We are requiring our universities to have a plan to demonstrate how the quality of the post-secondary programs will be improved, and we will be requiring them to report back to us —

The Deputy Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon David Johnson: — to prove that that quality has been enhanced. Finally, we are insisting that 30% of any tuition increase —

The Deputy Speaker: Minister, your time is up.

Mr Hampton: All I'm hearing is that you're giving modest- and middle-income families the opportunity to take on more debt if they want their children to go to college or university. We're already talking about debt levels of \$30,000 for young people. You're offering even higher debt levels. What this means in the real world, once you get off talking to the university presidents and talk to the real families and the real students out there, is that they won't be able to go to school. They can't afford to take on that debt level. They can't afford to take on the risk that when they graduate they'll be able to pay it back.

You keep saying your money tax scheme doesn't cost anything. Well, it does cost something. It's costing us the university and college access we need. It's costing us the health care we need. It's costing us the education we need. It's costing us a whole range of services that we need to take part in that so-called new economy. You're not going to do a thing for middle- and modest-income families except raise their taxes — in this case a \$5,000-a-year increase in education taxes.

I put it to you again: Other than putting more debt on middle- and modest-income families, how are young people going to access college and university? Debt and more debt for them isn't the answer. How are you going to help them?

Hon David Johnson: The member opposite is incorrect in that the cap level on the debt has not changed.

The cap level at \$7,000 will be the same under the new policy as it has been previously. An undergraduate will not be allowed to have any more debt in the future than in the past.

Mr Hampton: You're trying to fudge it.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, leader of the third party.

Hon David Johnson: But the leader of the third party is correct: The budget will have an impact on our economy.

Interjection: Tax breaks.

Hon David Johnson: Tax breaks will have an impact. They'll mean more jobs. They'll mean people will be able to keep more of their own money. It will mean that the economy of Ontario will continue to outpace the rest of Canada. We'll have a thriving economy and we'll have more jobs. As a result, we'll have more money to assist more students and create more opportunities in our post-secondary institutions.

WATER EXTRACTION PERMIT

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question to the Minister of the Environment. Let me say to the Minister of Education, though, that not even your friends on Bay Street believe your baloney about your tax scheme. They're telling you your tax scheme isn't doing it for you.

Minister, today I met with a US congressman from upper Michigan who, like me, is calling upon you to revoke the permit which you have given the Nova Group for the taking of 600 million litres of fresh water from Lake Superior each year. He points out, and he agrees with us, that this is shortsighted environmentally; it is shortsighted from the perspective of long-term public health; it is shortsighted from the perspective of sovereignty; it is shortsighted policy all around.

Minister, will you reverse your government's policy and revoke this permit now?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I am of course very concerned about this particular issue. However, I would say to the leader of the third party that my director who issued this permit is acting in accordance with the laws, policies and regulations left to us by your previous government.

Mr Hampton: There's a difference. The government that I was part of let it be known very publicly that we were not going to approve any water-taking permits that would end up in water becoming a commodity. We were not prepared to accept or even look at any water-taking permits that would provide in the long term for the export of Ontario's water.

I want to quote from the head of the Nova Group, who said today, "We did not back down. We're still in this venture. We're not out of it." They still want their permit.

The ball is in your court, Minister. Will you revoke the permit now? Quit trying to shuffle the issue off to the federal government; quit trying to work out a strategy with them for shuffling it off to the IJC. You approved the

permit; you should revoke the permit. Will you do that now?

1420

Hon Mr Sterling: It's the policy of this government to act within the laws of the province of Ontario. What we are trying to do —

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Member for Parkdale, come to order.

Hon Mr Sterling: — is to work in every possible way to put my director in the position of being able to revoke this permit at the earliest possible date.

In the interim, I am working with the federal government to not only address the problem raised by this but to address other problems which may arise in the future.

I might say to the member opposite, he may know, as a former Minister of Natural Resources, that the provincial government has nothing to do with the export of water from Canada to another country. That is within the federal constitutional mandate. He knows it, I know it and everybody else knows that.

Mr Hampton: I can't believe that we're seeing a minister here who granted a permit allowing for 600 million litres of fresh water to be taken from Lake Superior, knew that part of the scheme was the export of that water to a foreign country and without consulting with anyone, without consulting with the federal government, without consulting with any of the Great Lake states in the United States, tried to slip this quietly through the system and now he wants to pretend as if he didn't know what was happening. If that's the case you're making, Minister, you should resign because you are incompetent.

Let's be very clear. The province of British Columbia has passed legislation placing a moratorium on the kind of scheme that you granted a permit for.

The Deputy Speaker: Question, please.

Mr Hampton: There is nothing stopping your government from bringing forward that kind of legislation; there is nothing stopping you from revoking that permit. Quit trying to hide behind process somewhere else. Quit trying to find an excuse. Revoke the permit. Stand up for Ontario's interests. Stand up for our long-term fresh water interests. Stop trying to divert water —

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Hon Mr Sterling: If anybody was trying to hide this we did a very poor job, because this application in total was put on the environmental registry for a period of 30 days. We in the Legislature provide the NDP with over \$1 million a year for research. Where was their research? Who was incompetent? Why didn't they raise the issue before, when in fact it was on the registry?

With regard to the second matter, with regard to an act which we may bring in —

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Hon Mr Sterling: The other matter which is somewhat amusing is that in 1989 or 1990 the Liberal government passed an act which prohibited the transfer of water. The leader of the third party was the Minister of Natural

Resources, whom that legislation fell under for a period of about two years or three years, I'm not sure which. Notwithstanding that, that transfer act was never proclaimed by the Liberals; it was never proclaimed by the Minister of Natural Resources for that period of time. He stands in the Legislature now and says we should pass an act. He could have done it at any point in time over a three-year period.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. You will know that this weekend, Thursday and Friday, in Parry Sound the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities will be meeting. You will also know that the region of Sudbury has commissioned your consulting group, KPMG, to do a study of the impact of provincial down-loading on northern Ontario and the regional municipality of Sudbury.

You will further know, because you have the report, that the most negatively affected area in all of Ontario is northern Ontario. You will further note that FONOM and the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association has given you fairness and equity in the north with the proposal to establish a permanent northern investment fund to replace the transition grant.

Minister, will you commit today, and go to Parry Sound and announce, that you will establish a permanent northern Ontario investment fund?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Thank you very much for the question. Certainly we'll be well represented in Parry Sound. We will meet with all the representatives of the north, as we did last week when we went to North Bay to talk to all of the northwestern municipalities.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Ask Hastings —

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Member for Kingston and The Islands.

Hon Mr Leach: Three hundred municipal officials met with us in Thunder Bay last week, Madam Speaker, with a number of my colleagues. I can tell you that the response to the programs of this government in northern Ontario is that it is well accepted by the municipalities in the north. The transfers that took place, every municipality in northern Ontario comes out with zero impact as a result of those. That information and my staff will be in Parry Sound on the weekend and I can assure them that the impact on those municipalities will be the same.

Mr Bartolucci: I don't know. He's in dreamland. The city of North Bay, the city of Sudbury, Callander, West Ferris — throughout Ontario — have requested money from you from what's known as the special circumstance fund. You have committed \$77 million to a special circumstance fund. So far, you have more than 500 applications from small, rural and northern municipalities asking for special circumstance funding, the same funding

you gave to the city of Toronto when you granted them \$50 million of free money.

Minister, we want you to be fair. You have in excess of 500 applications, which total approximately \$250 million. Will you grant, as you did with Toronto, special circumstance funding for each of those 500 municipalities?

Hon Mr Leach: Every one of the municipalities that has asked for help has got some help. I think the member's colleagues who were with me in Thunder Bay last week — Mr Miclash and Mr Gravelle — both were there to see —

Mr Gerretsen: Gravelle. He wasn't in Thunder Bay.

Hon Mr Leach: Gravelle, rather. My apologies to Mr Gravelle.

They were there to hear the responses from the municipality, where they were probably thanking this government for providing the amount of assistance that they got. At the bottom of every sheet for every municipality, the financial impact in those municipalities said "zero," and that will be the same case when my staff go to Parry Sound this weekend to meet with the central municipalities.

Mr Bartolucci: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: First of all, to make sure that Hansard is correct, I wasn't in Thunder Bay last weekend. However, Mr Gravelle —

The Deputy Speaker: That's not a point of order. Take your seat.

Mr Bartolucci: On a another point of order, Madam Speaker: The member for Port Arthur is Mr Gravelle, not Mr Gravelle.

The Deputy Speaker: That's not a point of order.

1430

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, your government keeps trying to say you can have this phoney tax scheme and still meet the needs of Ontario's health care system, and every day that's proven to be nonsense.

I note that in Tuesday's budget there wasn't a single mention of increased funding for mental health. We have a crisis in mental health, Minister. There are increasing numbers of people going without treatment for lack of funds and increasing numbers who are being warehoused in the corrections system.

On April 27, the Health Services Restructuring Commission told you that you need more investment in community-based mental health services, more forensic mental health beds, more community programs, more acute care, more supportive housing. Yet in all your glossy pronouncements, all your pride about the health system, not a single word about mental health services.

What does your government intend to do about the alarming shortage of mental health services in this province?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): We certainly share the concern that has been expressed. In fact, as she well knows, we did a few months ago deter-

mine that the mental health strategy that actually had been committed to and planned by the previous government was at a point in time where it was at the midway mark. It was in the fifth year of a 10-year plan. It was obvious that the strategy was not working as well as it should.

I asked my parliamentary assistant, Mr Newman, to conduct a review. He did a consultation with stakeholders. He received consultation and I am very pleased to indicate to you that we very soon will be making an announcement as to further reinvestments and community supports. In fact, it was our government that put a moratorium on the closing of the psychiatric beds. We said there would be no more closings until the appropriate community supports were there.

We look forward to making our announcement and ensuring that people in the province of Ontario have the best mental health services possible.

Mrs Boyd: Minister, we don't need more reports. We don't need more announcements from your government. We need the crisis met now with reinvestment.

Perhaps it won't alarm you, but it certainly alarms me that a man in severe mental health crisis was admitted to St Michael's Hospital emergency on April 3 and according to the staff in St Michael's emergency, this man, whose name cannot be mentioned because of privacy laws, needed to be subdued and restrained. There were no mental health beds available and this man was tied to a stretcher in an emergency room, in plain sight of anyone who was there, for three full days before he was transferred to the Wellesley Hospital to an acute bed.

For three full days he did not receive the treatment he needed, he was exposed to the public and was tied to a gurney. This situation jeopardized the care and safety of all the other patients who were in the St Michael's emergency during those three days. Minister, what are you going to do? It is a crisis. What are you going to do today?

Hon Mrs Witmer: That's exactly why we did the review, because we realized the strategy that had been determined by your government was at a point where it wasn't working for people. In fact, it was your government that cut \$60 million out of psychiatric facilities in this province. It was your government that cut 10% of Metro's psychiatric beds. I want to tell you, under our government we've recognized there is a need for more forensic beds and the number of forensic beds is actually up 20%.

FIREFIGHTING IN NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Many Ontarians have read or watched about the forest fire situation in northern Ontario, particularly the area north of Thunder Bay.

I understand you've recently had a chance to go up and view the situation. Could you provide the House with a report on your findings on the forest fire situation?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): I want to thank the member for Muskoka-

Georgian Bay for the question. There is a lot of concern about forest fires and about the very dry conditions in the forests in Ontario. In fact, this early fire season is truly a challenge right across Canada now.

There are currently some 14 fires being actioned in Ontario. Of course, the most significant of those is Thunder Bay 21. Some 25,000 hectares are now involved in that fire.

I am pleased to tell the member that I was there Monday and Tuesday of this week. I was there during the time when Gull Bay was evacuated, when that community was threatened. It no longer is threatened and the fire is actually not expanding at this point in time.

I was also interested to notice how some properties in that area had been protected by MNR fire crews, who put sprinklers on those buildings and managed to save a gas station while the forest fire raged around it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Answer, please.

Hon Mr Snobelen: It's quite interesting how the forest fire personnel work. There are some 40 fire ranger crews working there now and some 55 contract firefighters. They're supported by helicopters, of course, by bulldozers and by fire bombers, including our new —

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Perhaps you can finish in the supplementary.

Mr Grimmett: In my riding of Muskoka-Georgian Bay there's currently a fire ban on. We've had about 28 fires in the Huntsville area in the last week that local fire crews have been fighting. I understand from questions earlier this week and last week in this House that some members opposite have great concern about other parts of Ontario. It appears that it may be a drier spring and a worse fire season than in the past few years. I want to assure the people of my riding that we're prepared for these fires. Minister, I wonder if you could assure me that you feel the MNR is in fact prepared for the fire season.

Hon Mr Snobelen: I know that's a concern across Ontario. Some of the members opposite have suggested that perhaps the MNR is not ready for what promises to be a very active season, and I can assure the member that's not correct. In fact, we have acquired more equipment for our firefighting crews, including more helicopters and other support equipment. Obviously, we've spent almost \$200 million acquiring the very best water bombers available in the world. They're made right here in Canada — the 415s. We have a lot of equipment to help support the suppression of fires.

But the most important way of suppressing fires and the most important thing is well-trained people, and Ontario has the best-trained firefighters in the world. We have increased the number of fire rangers by 100 this year. We're up to 676. That's more than in 1993, 1994 or 1995. They are supported by trained people right across the province who are available to use their skills and their courage to fight fires in what promises to be a very hot season.

FERRY SERVICES

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):

My question is to the Minister of Transportation. You know that ever since the downloading announcements were made last spring by your government, people in the island communities who have been depending on ferry fee service subsidies over the last number of years have lived in fear with the threats your government has made to them of cutting the funding off as of December 31, which was later pushed forward to March 31 of this year. This has caused a great deal of anxiety for these people and it's also caused a great bit of chaos.

There have been media reports in the last couple of days that, in effect, your government has decided not to go ahead with the scheme you initially anticipated. As a matter of fact, Ernie Eves yesterday was quoted on CBC Ottawa as saying, "I believe the province should take over responsibility for the ferry service because municipalities do not have the wherewithal to handle the cost."

Minister, could you confirm right here and now that your government has changed its mind and that you're going to carry on the ferry fee service subsidies to these communities, not only in my riding but in other ridings throughout Ontario, for the foreseeable future, so that these people can live with some sort of sense of certainty in their lives?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Transportation): I thank the honourable member for the question. He is quite correct. The island residents, indeed the whole area deserves some certainty on this issue. That is why we are taking our time to come up with the right decision.

We are listening to the public in that area. We are listening through the hiring of our facilitator, Mr Dale Martin, who has had a great deal of experience in these areas. In fact, Deputy Premier Eves said he would be happy to discuss the Dale Martin report with me, which we are in the process of doing. He recognized that Mr Martin is an excellent facilitator, and he had some faith in Mr Martin's report, which I anticipate very shortly.

Mr Gerretsen: It's my understanding that Mr Martin has said he is finished with the job, that the report is with your ministry right now and that there's nothing further for him to do. This report, by the way, suggests that the government come up with some \$50 million to \$75 million in order to fund the new arrangement he's talking about.

But I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about the comment that Mr Eves, the Minister of Finance, made on CBC Ottawa yesterday in which he said, "I believe the province should take over responsibility for the ferry service because municipalities do not have the wherewithal to handle the cost." Remember, municipalities would have to increase their tax costs by something like seven or eight times what they're currently charging their property taxpayers in order to pay for that service.

Will you at least listen to the finance minister and get it straightened out with the members of your cabinet and, in effect, say to these islanders: "You have to fear no longer this drastic draconian kind of government action. We are

withdrawing that proposal and we're going to fund the lifeline you have to the mainland for the foreseeable future." Will you make that commitment?

Hon Mr Clement: If there are any fears, they've only been stoked by the honourable member and his party. We have been acting honourably; we have been dealing with the local residents; we have been consulting with them. We hired a facilitator to continue the consultation. We are quite confident that Mr Martin, when his final report is in the possession of myself and my caucus colleagues, will come up with a workable plan. Does it involve the province taking a leadership role with the communities? Yes, it does. We are not going to leave those residents high and dry, as it were. We are going to work with them for the best solution, not only for tomorrow or next week, but the best long-term solution because that's what those residents deserve.

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CHILD CARE

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Last year, you will remember, I worked very hard to try and save four school-based child care centres in this city. It took a lot of work to bring together city and province and, eventually, the federal government in an odd, strange way. We were able to save those centres. But there are four more child care centres that are now being threatened in Toronto. They've just received their eviction notices from the schools in which they are housed.

It's not just the kids and the families who use those centres who are being affected by this. In one of the schools, for example, at Highview Child Care in Scarborough, that room's also used for band and for the grade 1 to 3 lunchroom so that the little ones don't have to mix and compete with the older ones in the lunch hall.

These four centres are on the block right now. But everybody looking at this says, "This is only the beginning." As the result of cutbacks and as the result of the funding formula in education, we are going to lose these very important resources of school-based child care centres. It is crucial that you have an overall plan and vision for how to save these child care centres. Will you tell us what your ministry is going to do?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): The honourable member did indeed make some very strong efforts last year to help those child care operators continue to operate. One of the things that is causing me some concern with the school board in this particular case is that this government did recognize that existing child care spaces in schools were very important to protect. That's why they are protected. They are not included in the formula, as I understand it, when they're calculating the spaces as classroom space because it's not available for classroom space; it's being taken up by a child care centre and appropriately so.

I've been quite alarmed at some of the claims that seem to be coming out in the media. On the one hand, school board officials went to a public meeting and said they

weren't going to be closing schools. On the other hand, the chair of the board is out there saying that somehow they're going to be kicking out day care centres. I find this quite alarming. I'm quite prepared to have officials meet with the day care operators to see what we can do about easing this out, because I'm quite concerned about what might happen.

Ms Lankin: I appreciate the step you've just committed to, but I've got to tell you it's not just a question of excluding the space. The funding formula is driving schools to have to make decisions; for example, of using additional classroom space. That has to do with class sizes. People wouldn't argue that's a positive thing, but it takes up additional room. It means there are schools that will close in certain areas as the result of shifting kids from one school to another.

The bottom line is that through Bill 160 and through your cuts in terms of capital funding within Comsoc and within the Ministry of Education, you have sent a very clear message that child care is extraneous to our education system. You are no longer supporting it as an integrated part of our school system.

Anyone who says that you can have this phoney tax scheme and still support the needs of children in this province through meaningful and quality child care is giving you a line. What we see here is the cumulative effect of all the cuts that are taking place, and the funding formula in education.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Question, please.

Ms Lankin: The bottom line is, we are going to lose child care spaces. You have to not only save them in the schools, but you have to help us figure out how we're going to create new centre-based child care —

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon Mrs Ecker: With all due respect to the honourable member, today we have over 14,000 new licensed spaces than there were two and a half years ago.

Ms Lankin: You didn't create one of them. Most of them were subsidized, Janet.

Applause.

Ms Lankin: You don't know what you're applauding.

Hon Mrs Ecker: With all due respect to the honourable member who asked the question and now doesn't want to hear the answer, those 14,000 spaces were created by child care operators out there who were interested in meeting the needs of the parents who need that child care space.

With the school boards, not only have we protected those spaces and said that is child care space, so those boards do not have to move them out, we've given the Toronto board \$269 million in transitional costs to help them make the changes they're making. In addition, we have more money available for parents on child care. We've got the money we put through the learning and earning and parenting program, which is more money for subsidies. We've got more money for the child care tax credit for parents. So there are many ways we are trying to support parents access very badly needed child care in this province.

The Deputy Speaker: New question. Member for Oriole.

Mr David Caplan (Oriole): My question is to the Minister of Education and Training. Minister, your budget on page 84 claims that lifelong learning —

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Oriole, take your seat for a moment. I erred. I missed the member for High Park-Swansea in rotation. We'll come back to you.

Go ahead.

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): I appreciate your apology, Madam Speaker, and I accept it gracefully.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I hope this isn't a lob ball.

Mr Shea: The member for St Catharines knows it's never a lob ball.

HOME CARE

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): This is a most serious question I direct to the minister responsible for seniors. Over the last two weeks, I have heard several opposition members raise concerns about the request-for-proposal process being used by the 43 new community care access centres. In particular, they seem to be concerned that local monopolies no longer have a 100% guaranteed share of the market for home care services. In particular, they seem upset that commercial and not-for-profit operators will compete for contracts on a level playing field. Can the minister explain what health care consumers have to gain from these changes?

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]): I'd like to thank the member for his question and to respond that Ontario now has a community-based system of delivering home care and nursing support care to the citizens of Ontario. We used to have a system that was government run, that wasn't accountable and that was a monopoly. The government awarded the contracts to whomever it chose, and they had all the market. Today in Ontario these are community-based services with citizens who are participating on these volunteer boards. They are fully accountable and they award contracts on the highest quality of service they can monitor within their own communities.

This has resulted in some increased service levels. In my own community of Halton, savings have been achieved in the awarding of a nursing contract that, if fully implemented, would account for an additional 46,000 nursing visits in Halton region and 31,000 additional hours of homemaking. We are taking these savings and we are expanding services so that over half a million Ontario seniors and disabled citizens are now receiving home care in this province as a result of this program.

Mr Shea: My supplementary is also directed to the minister responsible for seniors. In many cases the CCACs are awarding contracts to commercial providers where previously those services were offered only by not-for-profits. What assurances can the minister give that quality of care will continue and that accountability for those public dollars will be maintained?

Hon Mr Jackson: The first point I want to share with the members of the House is that today in Ontario we have a system which is accountable. These budgets are monitored; they are approved in the year in which they're spent. When we became the government, it wasn't uncommon to have home care budgets spent a year before the budgets were even approved.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Oh, yeah? You sent the letter at the end of March. What are you talking about?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Member for London Centre.

Hon Mr Jackson: More important, we had a system in this province where, in parts of the province, all of the home care was being provided by a private operator and the not-for-profits didn't have access and weren't able to compete. We've created this level playing field with the highest standards of accountability, and the basis for that is on the evaluations the clients themselves make.

I know earlier this week the member for Windsor-Walkerville impugned the motives of the volunteer board of the Windsor CCAC. But we on this side of the House, the government, believe that the citizens themselves —

The Deputy Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon Mr Jackson: — who are managing these programs are doing an outstanding job listening to the clients themselves. In fact, the Windsor Star quoted a resident of that community, herself a card-carrying Liberal, Ms Rosemary Limarzi, who has received several —

The Deputy Speaker: I'm sorry, you've gone way over your time.

New question now, member for Oriole. I apologize for that.

1450

PART-TIME STUDENTS

Mr David Caplan (Oriole): My question is for the Minister of Education and Training. Minister, on page 84 of your budget you claimed that lifelong learning is no longer a slogan, but I'm not sure that's true, especially when it comes to our part-time university and college students who are trying to hold down a job and enhance and upgrade their skills.

Since your government has taken office, part-time enrolment in our college and university courses has dropped almost 18%. What have you done to help? Last year, you cut part-time students out of the provincial student assistance program entirely. Then you cut the funding to universities and colleges, forcing them to reduce night-time and summertime courses. Last but not least, you've allowed them to hike tuitions and deregulate fees across this province, putting affordable education out of reach.

Minister, how can you claim to be helping Ontarians to get lifelong education when at the same time you deny any support to part-time students? Will you make a commitment today to help working Ontarians continue their education? Will you give them access to assistance and to affordable tuition?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): You bet we'll make that commitment. We made that commitment in the budget and that commitment is to put in \$600 million more money over the next three years to assist our post-secondary students. That commitment is to put in \$9 billion to assist our post-secondary students through the Canada-Ontario millennium program. That commitment is to double the number of spaces in our colleges and in our universities in courses that are high demand, courses that our students are being denied the opportunity of today.

I would also say that over the past couple of days I've talked to a number of people representing the various colleges and one of the main reasons that the part-time enrolment is going down is because a whole lot of those people are finding jobs, jobs that they couldn't get under the NDP government, jobs they didn't have under the Liberal government. They're out there working.

Mr Caplan: The minister makes claims. He can't back them up. He takes the Canada millennium scholarship fund and tries to claim it as his own. That's called plagiarism, Minister. You should go back to school.

When you create access to opportunity and spaces, it doesn't matter, because there's no funding for part-time students to fill those spaces. You've cut them off student assistance programs, you've forced tuition hikes and deregulated fees, you've made it absolutely impossible for part-time students to get into those kind of programs. You can create as many spaces as you want, but if students can't afford tuition and if they can't get assistance and colleges and universities can't afford to offer the courses when students need to go, you're wasting your time and you're wasting taxpayers' dollars. Are you going to help part-time students today?

Hon David Johnson: We sure are. We sure are going to help our students and we're going to help them in the ways that were outlined in the budget. For example, involving part-time students, the tax expenditure credit has been extended. That's estimated to cost some \$75 million over the next three years. There is a particular program geared towards part-time students.

The member opposite may have forgotten what I mentioned a couple of days ago, that of all the industrialized nations we have the highest participation of post-secondary students at some 40%. That's excellent and that's the kind of record we want to maintain and continue, and that includes part-time students, that includes full-time students. All together, we have the highest rate of participation in the industrial world, and through the millennium scholarships, through all of the other money, the \$600 million in new moneys we're putting in to the system, we're going to make sure that participation rate carries on.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, we continue to try to understand the complex and incestuous relationship that

exists between your ministry and the supposedly arm's-length Health Services Restructuring Commission. Regulation 88/96, which sets out the commission's powers, reads in part: "To determine which local hospital restructuring plans provided by the ministry shall be implemented and to vary or add to those plans if it considers it in the public interest to do so."

Minister, will you explain to this House where this notion of non-political action by the Health Services Restructuring Commission comes in, if in fact they are only entitled to act on plans that are provided by the Ministry of Health?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): I would certainly seek to get some clarification on that section for you, since I don't have the information in front of me.

Mrs Boyd: I hope you will, because this is quite an issue in areas where there is real concern about political interference with the procedure. This question has been raised with the commission. Members of the public have asked to see the plan provided by the ministry and have been refused access to it.

Minister, it is extremely important, if the commission is to retain any vestige of integrity in the face of communities that see their hospitals closing, that you be able to answer clearly what this relationship is and what action the ministry takes to direct what the restructuring commission is going to decide.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I can indicate to you that the Health Services Restructuring Commission under Dr Sinclair is indeed an arm's-length commission. If there are ever plans that are submitted to the commission, those would be plans that I guess would be submitted by the DHCs, but certainly that commission is arm's length. It has been from the start and it continues to remain arm's length from the Ministry of Health and the government.

DEPUTY SPEAKER'S BIRTHDAY

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): On a point of privilege, Madam Speaker: I hope you will bear me out and let me set out this point of privilege, because it is indeed my privilege today, along with my colleagues, to invite other members of the Legislative Assembly to extend our sincerest congratulations and our many, many happy returns of the day to you, our Deputy Speaker, it being your birthday.

I am under threat of physical harm, although I'm not quite sure how our petite Deputy Speaker could actually perpetrate such physical harm, but I'm under threat not to reveal the age. I assure you it is not 39.

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): It's 29.

Ms Lankin: It's not even — I'm getting too close.

On this very, very significant birthday, many happy returns of the day from all of us.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Thank you. That is not a point of privilege, but thank you very much. I believe the Minister of Agriculture got it right: 29.

PETITIONS

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): I have a petition that reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas sections of Bill 160 allow the government unprecedented centralized control over education in Ontario; and

"Whereas sections of Bill 160 remove our democratic rights as citizens to comment or respond to education reform;

"Whereas sections of Bill 160 allow the government to make further massive cuts to education funding without public consultation or debate;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Amend those sections of Bill 160 listed above."

I attach my name to that petition as well.

1500

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Speaker, let me add my wishes of happy birthday to my seatmate.

I have further petitions. This one is from the Service Employees International Union, Local 528. It reads as follows:

"Whereas each year in Ontario approximately 300 workers are killed on the job, several thousand die of occupational diseases and 400,000 suffer work-related injuries and illnesses; and

"Whereas during the past decade the Workers' Health and Safety Centre proved to be the most cost-effective WCB-funded prevention organization dedicated to worker health and safety concerns; and

"Whereas the WCB provides over 80% of its legislated prevention funding to several employer-controlled safety associations and less than 20% to the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre recently lost several million dollars in funding and course revenue due to this government's changes to legislated training requirements; and

"Whereas 30% of Workers' Health and Safety Centre staff were laid off due to these lost training funds; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre now faces an additional 25% cut to its 1998 budget, which will be used to augment new funding for employer safety

associations in the health, education and service sectors; and

"Whereas the WCB's 1998 planned baseline budget cuts for safety associations and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre will be disproportionately against the workers' centre and reduce its 1998 budget allocation to less than 15% of the WCB prevention funding,

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the WCB's proposed cuts and direct the WCB to increase the Workers' Health and Safety Centre's funding to at least 50% of the WCB's legislated prevention funding; and

"Further, we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the WCB to significantly increase its legislated prevention funding in order to eliminate workplace illness, injury and death."

I do continue to support these petitions and add my name to theirs.

SCHOOL SAFETY

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Further petitions? The member for Scarborough Centre.

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and I must say happy birthday to you, as all members seem to be today.

I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas all schools in Ontario should be safe learning and working environments; and

"Whereas all Ontarians should be assured that safe school programs are in place in all Ontario schools; and

"Whereas a private member's bill has been drafted entitled An Act to Promote Safety in Ontario Schools and Create Positive Learning Environments for Ontario Students, 1998; and

"Whereas this bill will:

"Require all boards in Ontario to design and implement school safety programs, school codes of conduct, and anti-vandalism policies;

"Provide for effective early intervention strategies by requiring boards to design and implement anti-bullying policies and by providing boards with the ability to direct psychological assessments of students that they believe are at risk;

"Provide a provincial violence and weapons-free schools policy and allow boards the ability to exclude violent students from regular classroom settings;

"Give police the tools they need by creating a new provincial offence for trespassing on school property and backing it up with real consequences;

"Direct all boards in Ontario to design and implement alternative education programs for suspended or excluded students;

"Require parents to be liable for any damage done to school property by their children; and

"Protect teachers and staff from civil liability;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To pass into law the Safe Schools Act, 1998 as quickly as possible."

I have affixed my signature to this worthwhile petition.

EDUCATIONAL REFORM

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): Madam Speaker, let me extend a happy birthday to you as well. Congratulations.

I have a petition to the assembly which reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government wants to take an additional \$1 billion out of the education system this year and every year; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has decided to hire uncertified teachers in kindergarten, libraries, for guidance, physical education, the arts and technology; and

"Whereas the Ontario government wishes to remove the right to negotiate working conditions; and

"Whereas the Ontario government will remove at least 10,000 teachers from classrooms across the province; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has become the sole decision-maker on class size, preparation time and the length of the school day; and

"Whereas the Ontario government proposes to take decision-making powers out of the hands of locally elected community-minded trustees;

"We, the undersigned Ontario residents, strongly urge the government to repeal Bill 160 and create an accessible public consultation process for students, parents, teachers and school board administrators to study alternative solutions that have universal appeal and will lead to an improved educational system."

I have affixed my signature to the document.

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is an urgent need to amend the Young Offenders Act; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario continues to show inordinate levels of youth crime in the province with unsatisfactory outcomes; and

"Whereas it is clear that the Young Offenders Act does not go far enough in dealing effectively with the most serious and violent young offenders, particularly repeat offenders; and

"Whereas the time has come to take measures to ensure that these offenders are held accountable for their actions;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectively petition the province of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario pursue with the government of Canada to:

"(1) Redefine young offenders so that youths 16 and older are prosecuted as adults under the Criminal Code;

"(2) Provide for the prosecution of youths under the age of 12 for serious or violent offences;

"(3) Require youths transferred to adult court to have the same parole eligibility requirements as adult offenders;

"(4) Restrict access to free legal counsel to ensure parents meet provincial legal aid eligibility requirements;

"(5) Permit the publication of the names of youths convicted of serious violent crimes;

"(6) Apply the victim surcharge to young offenders; and

"(7) Provide for mandatory custody dispositions for youths convicted of an offence involving the use of weapons."

I affix my signature to all these petitions.

BEAR HUNTING

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a petition to the parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas black bear populations in Ontario are healthy with between 75,000 and 100,000 animals and their numbers are stable or increasing in many areas of the province; and

"Whereas black bear hunting is enjoyed by over 20,000 hunters annually in Ontario and black bears are a well-managed, renewable resource; and

"Whereas hunting regulations are based on sustained yield principles and all forms of hunting are needed to optimize the socioeconomic benefits associated with hunting; and

"Whereas the value of the spring bear hunt to tourist operators in northern Ontario is \$30 million annually, generating about 500 person-years of employment; and

"Whereas animal rights activists have launched a campaign of misinformation and emotional rhetoric to ban bear hunting and to end our hunting heritage in Ontario, ignoring the enormous impact this would have on the people of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario government protect our hunting heritage and continue to support all current forms of black bear hunting."

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr John L. Parker (York East): I have a petition here from a number of people in my riding of York East. In fact, this petition is signed exclusively by residents of my home community of Leaside. It is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas nurses in Ontario often experience coercion to participate in practices which directly contravene their deeply held ethical standards;

"Whereas pharmacists in Ontario are often pressured to dispense and/or sell chemicals and/or devices contrary to their moral or religious beliefs;

"Whereas public health workers in Ontario are expected to assist in providing controversial services and promoting controversial materials against their consciences;

"Whereas physicians in Ontario often experience pressure to give referrals for medications, treatments

and/or procedures which they believe to be gravely immoral;

"Whereas competent health care workers and students in various health care disciplines in Ontario have been denied training, employment, continued employment and advancement in their intended fields, and suffered other forms of unjust discrimination because of the dictates of their consciences; and

"Whereas health care workers experiencing such unjust discrimination have at present no practical and accessible legal means to protect themselves;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers, prohibiting coercion of and unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary to the dictates of their consciences and establishing penalties for such coercion and unjust discrimination."

1510

SECONDARY SCHOOL REFORM

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): There are many schools in my riding that have presented to me petitions of great concern in regard to their education. This petition reads:

"We believe that the heart of education in our province is the relationship between students and teachers and that this human and relational dimension should be maintained and extended in any proposed reform. As Minister of Education and Training, you should know how strongly we oppose many of the secondary school reform recommendations being proposed by the ministry and your government.

"We recognize and support the need to review secondary education in Ontario. The proposal for reform as put forward by the Minister of Education, however, is substantially flawed in several key areas: (a) reduced instructional time, (b) a reduction of instruction in English, (c) a reduction of qualified teaching personnel, (d) academic work experience credit not linked to education curriculum, and (e) devaluation of formal education.

"We strongly urge your ministry to delay the implementation of secondary school reform so that interested stakeholders — parents, students, school councils, trustees and teachers — are able to participate in a more meaningful consultation process which will help ensure that a high quality of publicly funded education is provided."

I affix my signature to this, being in total agreement with what they say.

CONTROL OF SMOKING

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I continue to receive petitions concerning rights, responsibilities and tobacco issues.

"Whereas the freedom of choice regarding tobacco smoking in a privately owned business, as previously allowed, is being unfairly curtailed by the strict and unnecessary enforcement of the regulatory tobacco act, as passed by the previous provincial government, in the counties of Brant, Elgin, Oxford and the riding of Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, request the province of Ontario to amend or revise the regulatory tobacco act in the following ways:

"That within the tobacco-producing counties of Brant, Elgin, Oxford, and the riding of Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, the policing of the regulated no-smoking protocol be left up to the municipalities to enforce as they see fit and that this also apply to any municipality, county or riding within Ontario where tobacco production or processing is an economic factor;

"That privately owned businesses who produce or process tobacco and/or whose businesses service or supply the tobacco industry and reside within the designated regions be exempt from the posting of the regulated no-smoking signs and be allowed proprietary discretion on tobacco use within their establishment;

"That the use of legal tobacco products, as used by adults, be allowed in businesses who produce or process tobacco and/or whose business services or supplies the tobacco industry within the designated regions without the fear of penalty or fines to their clients or staff."

Speaker, I also wish you happy birthday and hereby affix my signature to this.

LINHAVEN HOME FOR THE AGED

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition from a variety of people in St Catharines about Linhaven Home for the Aged. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Linhaven Home for the Aged has provided excellent service to seniors in St Catharines for many years; and

"Whereas the staff and volunteers at Linhaven have endeavoured to enhance the quality of life of residents of the home through their kind and compassionate care; and

"Whereas cuts in funding to Linhaven will result in a reduction of staff and resources available to meet the needs of seniors who reside in the home; and

"Whereas the discharging of acute care patients from active treatment hospitals results in medical staff at homes for the aged being required to provide more extensive and intensive care to patients who are discharged from hospitals; and

"Whereas Linhaven and other homes for the aged have among their residents more individuals afflicted with Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease and other medical conditions which require an appropriate complement of staff and necessary equipment to meet their medical needs;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the government of Ontario increase funding to Linhaven Home for Aged in St Catharines so that the medical requirements of

Linhaven residents may be properly addressed and seniors may live in dignity in our community."

I affix my signature to this petition as I am in full agreement with its contents.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Government whip.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister without Portfolio): Madam Speaker, I would have wished you happy birthday, but I've been counting the number of people who have wished you a happy birthday, and I'm sure that's already more than the number of years that you're old, so in that case I will just nod my head in greeting.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon David Turnbull (Minister without Portfolio): Pursuant to standing order 55, I wish to indicate the business of the House for the week of May 11, 1998.

Monday, May 11: afternoon, NDP opposition day; evening, continued debate on the budget motion.

Tuesday, May 12: afternoon, complete debate on the budget motion; evening, to be determined.

Wednesday, May 13: afternoon, Bill 16, the Small Business and Charities Protection Act; evening, to be determined.

Thursday, May 14: private members' public business ballot items 9 and 10; in the afternoon, Bill 16, the Small Business and Charities Protection Act.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

1998 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the adjourned debate on the amendment to the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister without Portfolio): Madam Speaker, I believe we have all-party agreement that we will not run the clock for the leader of the third party.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Is that agreed? Agreed.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): We certainly agree to that. I understand the debate will continue when the leader has finished, but he has as much time as he deems appropriate. Yes, we agree.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Leader of the third party?

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I will not be giving a speech talking about how the budgetary direction of this government ought to be approved. I will be talking at length about all the holes, all the inadequacies in the government's direction and the fact that many of the government's decisions are simply wrong.

When I look at the budget that was presented last week by the Minister of Finance, I see the government trying to

fool the people of Ontario into believing that they can finance their phoney tax scheme and also put \$9 billion into education here and billions of dollars into health over there. Anybody who tries to tell us that we can finance this government's phoney tax scheme and also provide the people of Ontario with the health care we need, with the education services we need, with the protection of the environment that we need and with the investment in our communities that we need — anyone who tries to tell you that you can finance this government's tax scheme and then look after all these other needs at the same time is simply not telling us the truth.

I want to go through, chapter and verse, what in fact is happening.

The packaging of the 1998 budget is incredibly fancy, the packaging is beautiful, but once you unwrap the packaging and look at some of the details, there's a lot of substance left out or, frankly, there's a lot of substance that just isn't true.

There's a glossy booklet that comes with the budget document bragging about 250 new jobs at the Babcock and Wilcox factory in Cambridge, where current employment is 900. The government wants to tell you that the 250 jobs that are going to be added is absolutely wonderful news. What the budget document doesn't tell you is that there used to be 1,700 workers at the Babcock and Wilcox factory in Cambridge. Back in 1994 and 1995 there were 1,700 workers there, before the Harris government was elected. According to the Kitchener-Waterloo Record, 700 of those people lost their jobs when the Premier of the province came back from a trip to Asia and said there were new contracts for that plant and then the new contracts that the Harris government announced didn't materialize. So 700 people lost their jobs.

The budget also claims to announce \$9.5 billion for workplace training spread over 10 years. This is a proposal to be negotiated with the federal government. It's all federal money. This Harris government announced in this Legislature that there was \$9.5 billion available for workplace training and it's not even their money. They don't even know if they're ever going to be able to get any of this money.

As I read the financial analysts and critics of the federal Liberal government, they say very clearly that the federal Liberal government is not going to be turning this money over to Ontario, just like they haven't turned it over to any of the other provinces. For this government to make the statement that they're going to provide \$9.5 billion for workplace training when they have no idea if they're ever even going to be able to get a fraction of that amount from the federal government is incredibly irresponsible and, frankly, I believe is misleading the people of Ontario.

1520

In fact, this government has been cutting the funding for workplace training. Anyone who reviews the employment contract of the former Deputy Minister of Education, one Veronica Lacey, will discover just what the cuts to

workplace training and adjustment have been under this government.

Then there is the incredible child care reannouncement. Two years ago in their budget, this government announced that they were going to put some new money into child care, but at the end of that budgetary year, when people looked around to see if any new money had gone to municipalities or communities for child care, they discovered that nothing had happened. In their budget last year, this government took that same announcement of two years ago, repackaged it and then said they were going to provide a tax credit for child care.

You could tell when it was announced in the budget last year that the vast majority of modest-income families would never be able to access this money, because in order to access the tax credit at the end of the year you had to spend money on child care during the year. The way this so-called tax credit was set up, a family would literally have to take food off the table and stop paying the rent in order to find the money to finance child care before they got a mere fraction of it back at the end of the year in the form of a child care tax credit. It was a scheme that was designed to fail. So none of that money has been made available for child care either.

In the budget of this week, the Minister of Finance took the same money again and repackaged it, only this time he's going to call it the Ontario child care supplement for working families. But we discovered, by doing some research between the actual announcement of the budget and now, that it's not going to go to anything like that. In fact, what the Harris government has done — just before they call an election — is that they have found a mechanism to mail out a cheque. Imagine that. After taking 22% of the income from some of the poorest families in Ontario, they have created a mechanism in this budget that just before they call the next election they're going to be mailing out a cheque to some of those families and trying to say to them: "Oh, how wonderful this government is. We're going to pay you \$85 a month now" — incredibly cynical, unbelievably cynical.

But what takes the cynicism even a step further is that after cutting the 22% from people who are unemployed, people who can't find work, the government is now going to redistribute it through this \$85-a-month scheme to those people who have found work but are literally working at minimum wage. It's literally stealing from the people who are the poorest in the province and then saying to the people who are situated next to them in the province, "Here's a little money courtesy of the Harris government" — a very cynical ploy. And then to try to disguise it as child care shows just how cynical this whole operation really is.

Then we have health care. There were a lot of wonderful headlines about health care. But anyone who cares to look beneath the surface will discover again that there isn't any substance here. The reality is, if you look at his government's investment in health care per person in 1998, it will be less than what was invested in health care per person in this province in 1992, yet we have an aging

population in Ontario, a population that is older now than it was in 1992, so the actual health care costs and health care needs have actually gone up. What this means is that not only has there been a cut per person in terms of health care investment, but in terms of the actual needs of the of the population there has been a cut in health care investment. That's the true record of this government.

The magnitude of the cut: In 1992 in Ontario we were investing \$1,655 per person in health care services. Now the Harris government is investing only \$1,639 per person in 1998, even as the need for health care services has increased.

Then we look at some of the budgetary sleights of hands. Last year the Harris government said it was going to provide hospitals with \$880 million to help hospitals deal with the orders issued by the Health Services Restructuring Commission, to help hospitals reposition themselves in the ongoing closure of hospital services and hospitals. The Harris government proudly made this statement: that \$880 million was going to move to hospitals in the budget last year. We checked, and \$880 million did not move to hospitals; only \$154 million actually moved to hospitals.

Why is this important? Because it points out again that this is a government that likes to make grandiose announcements in its budget, but then if you check on what's happening three months later, six months later, a year later, nothing has happened. The money that was promised, the investment that was promised, hasn't happened, and in this case it didn't happen in health care.

Let's take a look at nursing services. Since 1995, the Harris government has cut \$9 million for nursing services in the home, at a time when more nurses and health care professionals are needed in the home care program. So this year they've come up with an announcement that they're going to put \$5 million back into nursing care. But when you read the fine print you discover that it's not all going to home care. A little bit is going to home care, some is going to community health and some is going to public health.

After a \$9-million cut to nursing services for home care, the government now tries to pass off a \$5-million increase in nursing services as if it's all going into home care. Our analysis suggests that less than \$2 million will be going into home care, which means that they're still \$7 million behind in terms of nursing services in home care, as the need for home care is growing dramatically. Why is it growing dramatically? Because people can't get the nursing services in hospital any more. Ten thousand nurses have been laid off from our hospitals as a result of the cuts imposed on hospitals, so people can't get that nursing care in the hospital. They're being told, "Go home and get it," but when they go home they find that nursing services have been cut there too — again, this government's record of making grandiose announcements and then either not investing the money in health care or in fact cutting the money in health care after they've made the grandiose announcement.

The government says they're announcing up to \$75 million for more hospital beds in peak times and they estimate that \$50 million of the \$75 million will be available this year. But when you read the fine print, you find that the beds that are going to be made available are only temporary and the staff will be casual and part-time.

Hospitals across the province are saying: "We need some financial flexibility and we need some long-term stability and we need to have a trained nursing staff available, not on some sort of call-in basis, not on some sort of contingent basis; we need to have them regularly available." The government's plan is not going to provide for that. The government's plan is only going to provide nurses in very serious situations to be called in at peak hours or peak demand. In other words, you're not going to have the continuity of care that patients deserve and need.

The only flexibility, the only long-term capacity that you're going to find out of this government's reinvestment in health care is flexibility for this government — not flexibility for hospitals, not flexibility for nurses in the wards, not flexibility for people's health care; only flexibility for this government in terms of being able to make more announcements and then not follow them up with the real investment.

1530

The government says it's promising \$20 million to be put into the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program to identify high-risk pregnancies and children at risk and ensure that they receive community services. When we heard that, we were saying, "What community services would these be?" Nutrition supplements for pregnant women on social assistance? No, that's gone. That's been wiped out, so you don't get that. Where is the money for enhanced community services going to go when public health has been downloaded to municipalities, increasing the financial burden for them?

You've got across this province municipality after municipality, community after community who are now having public health downloaded on to them, saying: "We can't manage this. We can't support it financially. Not only that, we don't have the expertise to deal with it. Not only that, we're not geographically positioned to deal with it." So they're going to eliminate some of these services, but the Harris government says: "Oh, don't worry. We're going to make available some money to help enhance these services."

Again, the hypocrisy. The service is actually being cut, if not in some communities disappearing, yet this government says it's going to make more of the service available. How can they do that? They're downloading the service. They have frankly no capacity to do anything about public health services any more.

Then there's education. Boy, the education part of the announcement is even more cynical than the health part, because all this government has done on the education front is reannounce their education funding formula. This is the education funding formula that is forcing boards of education across the province to close schools. Why? Because there's not enough money in the funding formula

to provide each school with a janitor or a custodian any more; there's not enough money to ensure that you have a school secretary; there's not enough money to ensure that you have a principal; there's not enough money in many cases to pay the electricity bill or the heating bill or even the operating capital to ensure that the roof doesn't leak.

Boards of education are being forced by this government to close schools. So we have the new Niagara district school board announcing the closure of 35 schools; the Toronto Board of Education announcing that it is looking at closing 120 schools; the Ottawa Board of Education announcing that it is looking at the possibility of having to close between 20 and 30 schools; Sudbury boards of education looking at the closure of six schools; Thunder Bay board of education looking at the prospect of having to close six schools.

Across the province, board of education after board of education will have to close schools as a result of this government's cuts to the education funding formula. The government had the gall to reannounce that funding formula as if it were good news. The only news in terms of education is that the government will put in another \$50 million, one-time money, for the purchase of textbooks. Why do they have to do that? Because teachers and boards of education across the province came back to them and said, "Look, you can't implement any new curriculum if there's not money set aside for the purchase of textbooks to accompany that curriculum." So the \$50 million is actually being put in to cover up a mistake. This government thought they could implement a new curriculum without putting any money aside for textbooks. They were caught out and now they're having to admit that if you really want to implement a new curriculum you have to purchase the textbooks to do that.

The budget announces \$130 million for Internet networking in schools. We called the Ministry of Education and they say they have no idea how much of this will come from the province and how much of this will have to come from the private sector, and they have no idea how they're going to get this money from the private sector.

I'm concerned that the only way this money will come from the private sector will be if boards of education agree to turn over their schools to the private sector investor and let the private sector investor treat the school as a marketing place — in other words, the further privatization of our school services, the further privatization of education in this province. That's where I think this is headed.

If you add up the new \$50 million for textbooks, if you add up the \$12.5 million that the government says will be made available for labs, it works out to about \$12,000 per high school. Then there's supposed to be \$1 million for tutors and \$1.5 million for testing, \$69 million for school board debt retirement, and whatever of the \$130 million Internet money that is real. It gets pretty close to the \$200 million that Ernie Eves expects to take in salaries through the early retirement package. In fact, the Ontario Teachers' Federation suggests that the government was

ooking for ways to say it is putting new money into ducation; it's not. This is simply money that's being aken out of the salary budget for teachers because of the arly retirements. It's not new money at all.

Then we have colleges and universities. Boy, talk about omething cynical. The budget trumpets \$9 billion for illennium scholarships. Again, we did some research, nd what did we discover? The reality is that there is not a ingle penny of new Ontario money in this announcement. t's a proposal to take the existing money, the existing eagre amount of money that goes towards student assistance, and couple it with the federal government's nouncement of a millennium fund and then put a new ame on it. There is not one cent of new money from the rovince of Ontario. This is simply a coupling of the little it of money that is already available for student ssistance with the federal government's so-called millenium fund. You put a new package on it and say, "Isn't his great?" There is absolutely no new investment here or students who are trying to go to college and to niversity and trying to pay the incredible increases in ition fees with which this government has just hit people cross Ontario.

I want to dwell just a minute on that. If ever there was n expression of cynicism, we saw it in the way in which e government did not announce the incredible tuition fee creases until after the budget. If this government had nounced the tuition fee increases in the budget, verybody in Ontario would have said, "This is awful; this horrible," hitting people who want to go to medical hool with a \$5,000-a-year tuition fee increase, hitting eople who want to get an engineering degree with 3,000- and \$4,000-a-year tuition fee increases, hitting eople who want to get a degree in computer science with 3,000- and \$4,000- and \$5,000-a-year tuition fee creases. These are the largest tax increases that families cross Ontario have ever seen. There is absolutely no way e Harris government's tax scheme will provide middle-nd modest-income families with \$3,000 a year or \$4,000 year or \$5,000 a year to pay for these tuition-fee creases.

The government didn't announce the tuition fee creases until after the budget was presented. I think if e government were truly honest, the tuition fee increases ould have been in there with the budget so that people cross Ontario would have had a clear idea of what is ally happening.

I want to deal just for a minute with the plight, and the ea, of people with disabilities. The Harris government ned a document in 1995 stating that the Harris overnment would bring in an Ontarians with Disabilities ct to ensure that people with disabilities had an oppor- nity to get into the workforce, that accommodation was eated for people with disabilities so they could become embers of the workforce. It is now three years later, and e have not seen and we are not going to see an Ontarians ith Disabilities Act from this government. It's shameful, solutely shameful, a shameful way to treat some of the ost vulnerable people in our society.

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Instead, what has the government offered? The govern- ment offers a corporate tax break. The government offers a tax break for corporations, saying, "We will give you a very fast tax write-off if you will do something in this area." Let me suggest to you what's going to happen here, because there's evidence of this in the United States. Corporations will be very happy to take the tax break and do absolutely minimal things to accommodate people with disabilities. That was the experience in the United States. That's why jurisdictions in the United States passed disability legislation, to ensure that these kinds of tax schemes were not taken advantage of and then people with disabilities literally pushed to the side. I'll say to you very clearly that that's what's going to happen here. This is a tax break for the corporate friends of the government. This is not going to accommodate or help Ontarians with disabilities.

I want to deal with children's aid. The government made a much ballyhooed statement that they were going to add money to children's aid societies across the province. We did some research to check out the government's headline, and this is what we found.

The reality is that because this government cut the budgets of all the children's aid societies across this province in 1995, because they dramatically cut their budgets, virtually each and every children's aid society across this province has been running a deficit in 1995-96, in 1996-97 and again in 1997-98, and the government at the end of the year has had to cover some of these deficits. The children's aid societies have to help children in trouble, they have to help children who need protection, they have to help children who come under child welfare legislation, so they go out there and they do it. In many cases they're handling caseloads that are far beyond their capacity to endure over the longer term, and at the end of the year the government comes in and covers the eventual cost.

What is the government trying to do in their budget? They're trying to say that the money which goes to cover the end-of-the-year deficits for children's aid societies is somehow new money. It's not new money. What it is is a government trying to cover its tracks, a government trying to cover up the fact that it cut the funding of children's aid societies, it placed children in communities all across this province at risk and it denied the services that children need from those children. Now, as it puts a little money back in, it's trying to announce that as if it were some incredible accomplishment. It's a government merely trying to cover up its own tracks.

To show you how phoney the announcement is, when we did the research we discovered that only \$20 million in new money will go to children's aid societies in 1998-99. In 1999-2000, it may be \$40 million, and in 2000-2001, if anyone can predict how the economy will be doing in 2000-2001, it may be another \$30 million, for a grand total of \$90 million over three years. But the government wants you to believe that it's \$170 million in new money — again a shallow, phoney, cynical announcement that is

not going to be observed, at the expense of some of the most vulnerable children in Ontario.

Then there's the environment. We saw the headline about the environment. The government says it is going to put money back into the environment. It works out, if you read the budget document, to about \$20 million, maybe \$25 million if you give the government the benefit of some of the spin lines. It's at most \$25 million, when this government's operating cuts and capital cuts to the Ministry of the Environment amount to more than \$150 million — absolutely unbelievable.

This is a government that laid off 750 scientists, inspectors, enforcement officers, monitors and technicians at the Ministry of the Environment. It created such a fiasco in the Ministry of the Environment that you have the Plastimet fire in Hamilton. You have that sort of situation and the Ministry of the Environment has no idea and doesn't have the capacity to tell us what actually happened there.

You have the government announcing its Drive Clean program, and then it's embarrassed afterwards to have to admit that the Drive Clean program won't get off the ground because all the people who had the expertise in the Ministry of Environment to get the program off the ground don't work there any more. They were cut. They're now unemployed. They're gone. But this government puts out a flashy announcement that there might be \$25 million going back into the environment, after they cut over \$150 million since they became the government of the province. Again, how cynical.

There is another area I want to deal with because it is so important. I think it again speaks to the cynical attitude of this government. It is what all people across rural Ontario are feeling. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture and farm groups from across this province, in the initial two years of this government, went to this government and said: "We don't like the fact that you're cutting agricultural programs. We don't like the fact that you're cutting rural health care. We don't like the fact that you're cutting infrastructure in rural Ontario. We will work with you, but we want you to reinvest in agriculture and rural Ontario down the road."

This spring and this winter, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and an alliance of other agricultural groups went to this government and said: "Here's a plan for reinvestment. We want you to now reinvest in rural Ontario." The message from the OFA and the message from those agricultural groups was clear, it was persuasive, it's workable and it's affordable. They worked very hard with the Harris Conservative government to find and create those opportunities for reinvestment. They were very hopeful that in this budget they would see some needed reinvestment in rural Ontario.

Let me quote from the communiqué from the Farmers of Ontario. The title of the communiqué is *A Promise Made, A Promise Broken*. It says: "The Farmers of Ontario, a coalition of 37 farm organizations, are extremely disappointed with the government of Ontario for not living up to its election promise."

These 37 farm organizations refer to the Harris Conservative's promise in the 1995 election which was, under a Mike Harris government, agriculture will regain its fair share of government support. This is what happened and this is what the farm organizations are so upset about: In 1992 the NDP government maintained \$453 million in agricultural investment and food programs and services. The Conservative government, promising to give the farmers of Ontario their fair share of support, cut \$160 million out of investment in rural Ontario and out of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Farmers have told us that the Harris government has reduced their business partner, the farmers' business partner, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, to a series of ad hoc programs that do not reflect the needs of farmers, that are difficult to access for farmers, and that do nothing to reinvest and restore the confidence of farmers in the future of Ontario's food industry. The farmers of Ontario are very angry with this government, very angry that they worked so hard with this government and now have been given the back of the hand by this government.

I want to say it is a fundamental error for this government not to reinvest in the communities of rural Ontario, not to reinvest in the agricultural industry in Ontario.

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I could go on, but I just want to make one plea for people who are out there. You're going to hear over and over again that the Harris government's tax scheme is benefiting you. So I make this plea to people: Sit down, take a blank sheet of paper and draw a line down the middle. On one side, write down the Harris tax scheme and actually look at your paycheque or your pension cheque and try to figure out what benefit you've gotten from the Harris government's tax scheme. If it's \$10 a week, write it down; if it's \$15 every two weeks, write it down.

But on the other side of the page I want you to write down some things too. If you have a son or daughter in university, write down \$1,100 in tuition fee increases. That's how much tuition fees have increased over the last three years under this government. If you have a son or a daughter who's trying to go to an engineering program, or a computer science program, or a commerce program, or is trying to get into pharmacy or is trying to get into medical school or law school, write down \$5,000 in tuition fee increases, because that's the new education tax the government just announced today. If you have a son or daughter in community college, add \$600 a year in tax increases there, because that's how much tuitions have increased.

If you're a senior citizen who needs prescription medicine in order to regulate and maintain your health, add \$300 a year in prescription copayment fees.

If you have a daughter or son in high school, ask them about the new student activity fee, which is at least \$100 in the vast majority of high schools across this province.

Then call up your municipal clerk and ask them how much municipal property taxes are going to increase after

this government is finished downloading the cost of ambulances, public health, policing, fire, social assistance, child care and a whole host of other programs that used to be paid for out of your income tax. Municipalities will tell you that they're looking at property tax increases of \$300, \$400, \$500.

I simply say to people, take that ledger. On the one side add up the tax scheme benefit that the Harris government says you're receiving, and on the other side add up all the new user fees, the copayment fees, the administrative fees, the property taxes, the tuition fees and all the other hidden taxes the Harris government has trying to put on you.

I'll make you a wager: that if you are a modest middle-income family in Ontario, you are going to be paying more taxes than you paid before, only they're going to be hidden as fees and property taxes and tuition fees and so on.

The only people who are benefiting from this government's tax scheme are the wealthiest people in this province. They are the only people who are going to benefit from this tax scheme, because it's only when an individual has an income of \$75,000 or \$80,000 a year that the supposed benefits of the tax scheme start to overvalue all the new hidden fees, all the new property taxes, all the new tuition increases and all the new copayment, administrative and whatever fees this government has put on you. It's only then, only when an individual has an income of about \$75,000 or \$80,000 a year, that there are actually some benefits out of this government's income tax scheme.

When you get up into an income of \$150,000 a year, there are more benefits; \$200,000 a year — more benefits. If you're Frank Stronach, you get back from the Harris government, out of their tax scheme, \$600,000. This is an income tax scheme for the wealthiest people in the province. For middle- and modest-income families in this province, it's higher tuition fees, higher property taxes, higher copayment fees of every kind.

I am opposed to this government's budgetary direction. I believe this government is headed in the wrong direction and I want to add this amendment to the motion that is already put amending this government's budget. It is this:

I move that the amendment to the motion be amended by inserting after "the best start in life" the following:

and

That the government's phoney tax scheme will continue to cause damage to Ontario's health care, education and other vital services until reversed by a future government.

When we become the government of Ontario, we'll reverse that phoney tax scheme.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Mr Hampton has moved that the amendment to the motion be amended by inserting after "the best start in life" the following:

and

That the government's phoney tax scheme will continue to cause damage to Ontario's health care, education and other vital services until reversed by a future government.

Further debate?

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): It is certainly a pleasure for me to be able to respond to the budget. After listening to this speech of a few minutes ago, all doom and gloom and how terrible, let me tell you that some of the darkest hours, the darkest days this province ever had were back in 1990-95. That was a period of time when business left this country. That was a period of time when jobs were leaving. People were fleeing this province, going to other provinces and to the States where there were less taxes and a less draconian type of government. It was a time when some 400,000 net new jobs were created across Canada, but here in Ontario over that period of time it was minus 10,000 jobs. Indeed, it was a dark, dreary time for Ontario. It was a time when the government of the day kept two sets of books to keep the public of Ontario totally confused.

This budget, Madam Speaker — and happy birthday to you and welcome back — is a budget about the cutting of taxes: the cutting of income tax; the cutting of payroll tax such as the employer health tax; the cutting of corporate taxes. One of the reasons people are not seeing more money in their paycheques is because of increased payroll taxes by the federal government. But keep talking it up, leader of the third party and leader of the official opposition, because the more you talk about it, the more people will think that the federal government is not taking that much money away from you. They'll spend more and that will stimulate the economy. It's great.

It's good to see that we are now in a position to reinvest in priority areas and it's certainly helping in the area of health care, education and so on. In the budget there was reference made in the special edition, *The Ontario Success Story*, and I think I can have this in here without too much trouble. It referred to a company in my riding, Ste Anne's Country Inn and Spa, and I want to make special recognition of those entrepreneurs near Grafton who have some 562 acres where they operate the inn.

The property was purchased back in 1981, and by 1985 they had developed as a bed and breakfast, and it just kept evolving. The people who came talked about the spring water, so they started to package the spring water. They used to have some 400 deer on the farm — actually it was 1,000 deer. They now have 400 elk on the farm. At these three enterprises they now employ 150 people, a real success story. We're proud to have them along with many other businesses in Northumberland.

The main core of this budget, as in some of our other budgets, was cutting taxes, getting the government out of people's faces and letting people get on with business. I think there are 10 good reasons why we should be cutting taxes here in Ontario and I'd like to line my speech up with these 10 reasons. I think they are 10 very good reasons why we should be cutting taxes here in Ontario.

The first is that Canada is the highest-taxed jurisdiction in the world; at least it's one of the highest-taxed. Do you know that the federal income tax is actually 22 cents on every dollar that's earned? That's even more than what it costs the average person for shelter. Seventeen cents comes out of the dollar for shelter, 12 cents comes out of

the dollar for food, and you add this tax on to property tax, the provincial income tax, sales taxes, energy taxes, and the list goes on. Statistics Canada shows that from 1992 to 1995, income taxes rose 15% on average here in Canada. Household spending at the same time rose some 8%. Therefore the income tax alone doubled the rate of household spending.

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The second reason for cutting taxes is that high taxes create nations of tax cheats, and certainly that was what was going on here in Ontario. From 1960 to 1998, the underground economy moved from an estimate of 5% to 15%. The byproduct of high taxation is tax evasion. What's the response of the federal government? "We'll get tougher on them. We'll find them, we'll chase them, we'll hound them" rather than address the real problems of high taxes and wastage in their operation.

The third reason for cutting of taxes relates to the fact that we simply did promise to cut taxes and we are delivering. That's a change in politics, to really follow through on promises. Take, for example, Premier Glen Clark. He promised to cut taxes, but what has happened? Even though he promised that if he didn't cut taxes he would resign, he's still moving on with higher taxes, keeps increasing. That's out on the Canadian left coast. What's happening out there? People are leaving and moving to Alberta. Businesses are going to Alberta faster than all people coming into BC put together. If he would just keep his promise, BC could be a province like it used to be.

It's also interesting to note that now Paul Martin is trying to take the credit for the tax cuts here in Ontario. I can't imagine anything more absurd than Paul Martin trying to take that credit, but then, being a Liberal, I guess you'd jump at any opportunity you possibly could.

The fourth reason we should be cutting taxes is that Canadians are getting very angry with the high tax rate that's here in Ontario. A poll taken by Angus Reid back in December indicated that 82% of the population of Canada think the taxes are too high, and they even rejected the idea that you should tax those with high incomes more and tax corporations. They're not even impressed with that kind of thinking.

We do have just a massive tax grab here in Canada with the Canada pension plan. They're indicating that the premiums are going to go from 5.6% up to 9.9% by the year 2003. That will be a 73% increase. That's certainly extremely unfair, and the federal government recognized it, because they are protecting the federal employees from this. They'll contribute the same to their pension even though the Canada pension will go up tremendously. There will be a reduction of some \$20 million into their pension plan, because the extra is going to the Canada pension plan. Most unfortunate. They recognize the problem that they have created.

The fifth reason we should be getting rid of taxes is that high taxes discourage productivity. People get pretty discouraged when they earn some extra income and off it goes to taxes, whether it be gas tax or income tax or whatever. Why bother? I hear that so often: "Why should

I put in those extra hours? Why should I work so hard to make some extra money and then it all goes to the government?" I'm sure the opposition has heard this on many occasions.

Unfortunately, businesses are forced to invest so much time and money into how to work their way around and how to save as much tax as possible when really what they should be focusing on is the operation of their business rather than having to worry about the excessive taxes that we have in this province.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I think the member is quite right, and as an employer, the Legislative Assembly has a right to expect a quorum during the member's speech.

The Deputy Speaker: Clerk, could you check and see if there is a quorum, please.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Northumberland.

Mr Galt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate getting a quorum in the House.

The sixth point is lower taxes, and with lower taxes are increased tax revenues. We've talked about this considerably. There's just no question. You can see it happening here in Ontario. We cut the income tax. What has happened from the budget of 1994-95 till now has been a \$6-billion increase in revenues coming in. It's just a natural circle, a natural cycle. There's nothing magic about it. There is saving, there's spending, there's investing, and this ends up in job growth.

My seventh point on why taxes should be cut is that in high-tax jurisdictions, people leave, businesses leave and jobs leave. In a recent poll by Angus Reid in BC, they found that 28% of the businesses planned to leave in the next two years. Reason: high taxes. It's not surprising they would want to leave.

In the States, where they looked at the 10 states with the highest taxes versus the 10 states with the lowest taxes, there was a 20% economic improvement in the ones with the lowest taxes. Also, there were 1,000 people per day moving from the highest-taxed states to the lowest-taxed states.

The eighth point: It's only fair to pay back those who have helped to balance the budget. We are now reinvesting in health care, reinvesting in education, reinvesting in job creation and in safety.

My ninth reason for cutting taxes is that tax cuts force governments to prioritize spending. It's kind of strange, but as we look around we see that spending will expand to fill any amount of money that's out there or any amount of borrowing that the previous government could possibly carry out. Tax cuts are the seeds of future growth. It increases the size of that economic pie. Reducing taxes stimulates the economy and people start spending because they have money in their pockets. Once they start spend-

ing, that creates jobs, and on the cycle goes. With more jobs created, more taxes are flowing in to the coffers.

My last point is that tax cuts really do create jobs. Look at the turnaround in this province: almost 350,000 jobs since we took office. What happened in the five years before? Minus 10,000 jobs. What was happening across Canada in that period? Four hundred thousand net jobs in that five-year period of 1990-95. At that time, Ontario was an anchor around the neck of the rest of Canada. Now Ontario is pulling Canada up by its bootstraps.

There's no question that the lower taxes, whether it's income tax or payroll taxes or corporate taxes, are stimulating the business of this province. It's stimulating jobs. We are going ahead. This was the right budget at the right time. I'm very pleased to be part of the government that is bringing in this budget and is going to help now with reinvestments in various areas like health care and education, helping with safety. Finally, we have the deficit under control and it's going to be eliminated, come the year 2000-2001.

Thanks very much, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to respond to the budget.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Bradley: The member has been the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment. I know he must be shocked and surprised that once again the environment budget has taken it in the ear, that once again the allocation of investment in the Ministry of the Environment for the purpose of protecting our environment has been reduced, that in fact it's now over one third of the complement of staff and one third of the budget of the Ministry of the Environment that's been cut.

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While I understand that many of the people who attend your fund-raisers may well like that — because they didn't like the Ministry of the Environment because it was there to protect the people of this province against those who would cause damage to our environment — some people thought they should just be able to carry on as they have many years ago; that is, without giving full consideration to the environment.

The general population loses and those corporations and businesses that genuinely feel strongly about the environment, who have invested the money in that field, who have invested in the training of their employees, who have acquired the resources to deal with environmental challenges, are the ones who as well are going to be complaining. But I can assure you that if you go to any Tory fund-raiser, you will find a lot of people who will be applauding the reduction in the role and responsibility of the Ministry of the Environment of Ontario.

If this government leaves one legacy of which it cannot be proud at all, it will certainly be its record in dealing with environmental issues. That's unfortunate, because I think there are many people who are members of the Conservative Party across this province who have a genuine concern about the environment. When they see the environmental ministry virtually dismantled by this government, I know they, like the member, must be sad indeed.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? The member for London Centre.

Mrs Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and may I wish you the very best returns of the day. I'd like to respond to the member for Northumberland's speech and remind him that he is engaged in a very slick public relations scheme when he tries to present part of the truth of the reality around the economy of Ontario and what's happening.

Even the Minister of Finance admitted not long ago that the tax cuts had not had the effect on the economy that had been expected. Even he was prepared to admit that the tax scheme that this government has put into place has very little to do with the increase in the economy. That is mostly because of lower interest rates, because of the kinds of changes that had to come, the restructuring that had to happen within our manufacturing sector, which came through those very difficult periods of the recession.

I really thought for a moment that the member was going to break his arm, he was patting himself so hard on the back. I was a little worried, because if he did that he wouldn't have any health care, especially in his community, as we all know.

I would say to the member that when you use this kind of rhetoric about this budget, you are underestimating your constituents and all the people of Ontario. They know that this is a puffball budget, that it is very slick and very glossy and that the reality for them will not be a better life, particularly if they don't happen to be among the top 10% of earners in this province. Most people aren't in that top 10%. You are redistributing the wealth to them directly.

Mr John L. Parker (York East): I listened carefully to the remarks of my colleague from Northumberland and I appreciated his message here today. I thought it was very creative of him to put his comments in terms of the 10 reasons why tax cuts are a good thing. When you boil it all down, his message to me was that it's time governments recognized that the taxpayer's dollar is a scarce resource to be treated with respect. It's a resource that can be put to good purpose if it's properly applied and if it's not just assumed that the taxpayer is an endless well for government to dip into whenever government wants to spend money here or spend money there or respond to this pressure group or that pressure group or that vested interest or whatever.

But when government disciplines itself to determine its priorities in consultation with the people and to apply the taxpayers' resources to addressing those priorities, then we have a proper balance of the public interest and the private interest. The byproduct effect, as the member for Northumberland so effectively illustrated, is that the pot that's available for government to draw from actually grows. When you have a stronger economy, when you have more people working, when you have more people paying taxes, then there are more resources available to meet the priorities that society has identified and that government is entrusted to discharge.

In the budget that came down this week we saw increased health care spending. No thanks to Ottawa, no thanks to Mr Bradley's Liberal friends in Ottawa who have reduced transfers to this province, but the health care spending in this province has actually increased and this budget increases health care spending more. We found spending in the classroom —

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. The member's time has expired. Further questions and comments?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): First of all, why would you complain about the transfers when in effect you're giving that same amount of money in tax cuts to people?

Let's just take a look at the facts. I'm looking at the government's own budget document. Let's just take a look at what's happening to the public debt in this province. In 1995, the public debt was \$89 billion. It has now gone up to \$105 billion. In the last three years the public debt of this province has grown by \$16 billion, partly as a result of your tax cuts.

When you look at the amounts of money we pay annually as interest on the public debt, how much is it? This is according to your own documents. It's gone up from \$7.4 billion in interest payments to \$9.1 billion. Take a look at it. More than \$1.7 billion more in interest payments at a time when interest rates are at an all-time low.

Let's deal with the actual tax cuts. Again, dealing with your own document here, some of the examples that have been given in the budget document: Somebody who earns \$14,900 — this is a senior, this is an example in the budget — how much do they save? They save \$230 over four years. That is more than one year of user fees that you're charging. This is in your own document. How about a couple who has an income of \$29,000? How much do they save? They save \$1,600 over four years. That's \$400 per year.

Let's get one thing straight. Would we all like a tax cut? Of course, we'd all like a tax cut. The problem is we cannot afford it. The public debt of this province is still rising and the interest payments that we're paying on that have risen by \$1.7 billion just over the last three years that you folks have been in office.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Northumberland.

Mr Galt: I appreciate all the responses, particularly the one from the member for York East. His comments were very apropos.

I'd like to respond to the member for St Catharines, my friend from the Niagara Peninsula. I'm disappointed every time a Liberal gets up. All they can talk about is spending. Do you know that from 1985 to 1990 the tax freedom day moved from May 25 to June 21? That leads me to believe that the Liberals have the right title: "Tax and spend." The NDP should be called the spend-and-borrow government, because they doubled the debt. They didn't have the intestinal fortitude to go out and tax. They just borrowed and left it on future generations.

I want to talk for a moment about the member for St Catharines, the previous Minister of Environment. He talks about this government and an environment record. Let me tell you that within a year and a half we did more for the province of Ontario for environment than you people did in the previous 10 years. The previous government ducked on waste energy incinerators. We brought out the G-7 guideline. We brought out an Environmental Assessment Act that works. We're now getting on with environmental assessment activities. We're in the process of bringing out standardized approvals for landfill sites. We've worked on reg reform and have come out with all kinds of new regulations that work. They're not just cumbersome and awkward red tape — one, for example, on reducing the evaporative level of gasoline, helping with smog. We've come out with a standardized approval process that helps to clarify and get on with the business of looking after the environment. We've brought out the storm water tunnel to help look after the Toronto beaches. We've returned the managed forest tax rebate. We've taken the taxes off conservation lands. We've come out with a smog plan. We have a Drive Clean program. Unfortunately, my two minutes are up.

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The Deputy Speaker: Further debate. The member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and happy birthday to you as well. I want to join the others in saying that to you, wishing you well on this very special day for you.

What I regret, and I'm sure all members of this Legislature regret, is the fact that I will have only 20 minutes to be able to share some thoughts with you this afternoon. Because of the draconian rule changes you have imposed upon this Legislature, members of this Legislature individually may at this point in the debate spend only 20 minutes dealing with the entire budget, and the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale alone will only be able to spend two or three minutes in rebuttal of this.

I feel concerned, first of all, about the fact that you've changed the rules of this House. I know it makes the House more efficient. I know it runs this House, the legislative process, the democratic process, like a big business. But that is not the way we should run a democracy. Big business should run the way big business does; that's the way they operate. I don't expect they're going to operate under these legislative rules, and we should not operate the way Conrad Black operates his businesses.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: I know, as the Minister of Municipal Affairs interjects, that his friend Conrad Black is pleased with this budget. I saw a photograph of him the other day; he had a smile from ear to ear. I'm sure that many of his newspapers editorially will be reflecting his point of view. Indeed, he owns 58 out of 104 of those particular newspapers.

Mr Galt: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I want you to rule on the fact that the member for St Catharines

has never had a speech where he hasn't mentioned Conrad Black.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. Member, take your seat.

Mr Bradley: I have to mention him, because he's obviously one of the big supporters of this government. The wealthiest people in this province, if they don't have a social conscience, should be in favour of this government. I don't know whether Mr Black has one or not; he may. But I know that the wealthiest people in this province are happy with this government and they will show up at all the Conservative fund-raisers. I assure you, in St Catharines tonight they'll be turning them away at the doors. The developers will be lined up at the fund-raiser, all the big-business types, all the people who want to say, "Thank you, Mike Harris, for making one rule for the rich and one rule for the rest." I expect that you will be very financially successful in that regard —

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): You are extremely rich yourself.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Etobicoke-Rexdale.

Mr Bradley: — just as I can hear the tinkle of the champagne glasses touching one another at the Albany Club as each new initiative in the budget was announced. As those people of means, those people of wealth, those people of power gathered together after the budget at the Albany Club, they were celebrating, and so they should. But does that mean the people who are the middle- and lower-middle class and those people who don't have much wealth should be cheering? The answer is no.

Some people will write an editorial — you get them in the Conrad Black newspapers — that take, word for word, from the budget what the budget says, as though somehow there's some degree of truth in the budget. But let me just point out who benefits from an income tax cut, as opposed to, for instance, a sales tax cut.

If a person makes \$1 million a year — let's say Conrad Black made \$1 million a year. He makes far more than that, but let's say he makes \$1 million a year.

Mr Hastings: That's you.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Bradley: I don't want to talk about Mike Harris; he will be embarrassed. But I want to say this. What if he makes \$1 million a year? If he makes \$1 million a year and you gave him only a 10% cut in provincial income tax, then one would presume he's going to get \$100,000 back in his pocket. Whereas if a person is making \$10,000 a year and you gave that person a 30% cut, for instance, what would they get? My friend the member for Etobicoke-Humber will tell me they would get a \$3,000 cut. Would it be that much, \$3,000? Maybe at the most. I look at that and I say, "The more money you're making the better you do." You can play all the percentages you want. I remember people used to say, "So-and-so got a 10% increase but another person got a 20% increase." Well, thank you. Ten per cent of \$1 million makes people very happy.

When you're talking about tax cuts of an income tax nature, those cuts benefit the richest people in the province the most. The people of wealth, the people of power are the people who show up at your fund-raisers, and they are there to say thank you. They say thank you in droves. As I keep saying to you people, you have to know it, the Minister of Municipal Affairs once said when he was in Ottawa, "I want to see more construction cranes and fewer whooping cranes in Ontario," I say to the Minister of the Environment. I can tell you that the Minister of Municipal Affairs was reported to have said that.

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: The member for St Catharines, that statement was never ever made.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order; however, you've got it on the record now.

Mr Bradley: I'm always prepared to take the word of my friend the Minister of Municipal Affairs that the Ottawa Citizen, or wherever that appeared, mistakenly quoted him. But the point I want to make is that those cranes will have to be going, because they have to build bigger halls to hold those fund-raisers for the Conservative Party.

What is the agenda behind this? Well, because these people on the opposite side really believe in the American system of politics where money reigns supreme, they are itching, I can assure the people of this province, to raise the spending limits in election campaigns, so they can carpet-bomb the province with advertising from the Conservative Party, so they can blanket this province with their advertisements.

Not only do they want to increase the amount of money you can spend in a campaign, but they also want to increase the amount of money that rich people can donate to the Conservative Party. The companies they want to be able to donate more, individuals they want to be able to donate more, and they want to change the rules so you can have advertising taking place outside of the last three weeks of a campaign. That's the real agenda. I hope my friends in the back benches know that. They haven't told you that yet, but that's the agenda.

They want money to rule supreme in Ontario politics. They don't want there to be arguments. I don't mind when you have a debate in this House, and you people on the other side put forward your views, we put forward our views, and the people make their choices. That's fine. That's what democracy is about. But when you have millions upon millions of dollars to launch into advertising campaigns, when there's no balance in the democratic system because money is on one side as opposed to the other, then I say to you, we do not have a healthy system and a fair system, and I see that's what is happening.

Let me tell you what else is happening over there. I don't think in my over 20 years in the Legislature I've seen anything which is as blatant political propaganda as this. This is a document, by the way, that is put out by an organization that is known as the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board. When the Premier announced this, I

was optimistic. Maybe this is a good idea to have something like this; maybe it will help out. He talked about the mandate that it had, and I thought this had some possibilities. Then I find out that the real purpose of it, apparently, is simply to be a propaganda machine for the government.

Let me tell you, first of all, who was made the chairman and the president and chief financial officer of this particular organization. This is supposed to be non-partisan, this is supposed to be civil service; in other words, within the public sector. Let me tell you who was appointed to it: David Lindsay. Maybe you would like to know, as would the people of this province, who David Lindsay, the head of this, is. Well, here's his biography.

David Lindsay was appointed principal secretary to the Premier of Ontario following the Progressive Conservative election victory on June 8, 1995. This followed his five years as principal secretary to the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario. Prior to joining Mr Harris's office, Mr Lindsay was the director of research and communications for the PC caucus at Queen's Park. During the minority government from 1985 to 1987, Mr Lindsay was executive assistant to the House leader of the official opposition, responsible for coordinating the question period process and legislative activities of the PC caucus. In the 1987 provincial election Mr Lindsay ran as a PC candidate in Don Mills.

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If he could say, "That part of my life is behind me. I've served the Progressive Conservative Party, the Progressive Conservative caucus. I was the person who sent out their missives about what was good about the Conservative Party and so on," put that behind him and say, "I've got a new job now. I've got a new responsibility. I've got something" —

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): "I've learned from my mistakes."

Mr Bradley: My friend from Dovercourt says, "I've learned from my mistakes."

Mr Silipo: Not me, him.

Mr Bradley: David Lindsay's mistakes. Let me put that aside. I don't want to put it in that context.

I thought that he's going to have the new job now and I suppose he's going to be non-partisan. He's going to be a public servant out there and he's going to have an operation which is really going to try to bring investment and jobs to Ontario, and I think that's good. When the Premier announced that, some people may have denounced it and been suspicious that it would be used for some other purpose. I thought that if it had what they described it as, that was good.

Then in the mail this week came out essentially a Conservative pamphlet. I don't know how you people with any conscience can accept this. Yes, a couple of you can, but I know some of the people here who have had some history in this Legislature and must themselves — I don't expect they're going to get up and say it — be absolutely ashamed to see a document of this kind.

I thought it was only given out to a few businesses and so on. I went home last night to St Catharines and I went into the mailbox and this was sitting there, so it's had widespread circulation. All it is is Conservative propaganda from start to end. That's all it is. Any objective observer would say that.

There are things you can have within your advertising which are reasonable. I was showing some people in the media what I thought was some reasonable government advertising and some advertising which was not. There are two different kinds.

For instance, they had an advertisement in the Toronto papers saying, and the Minister of Municipal Affairs would be aware of this, "Here is what is happening with your property tax, and you can go to this forum or this open house and have your particular circumstances explained." It had a little bit of priming the government in it, but I thought it was a reasonable ad and a good expenditure. I saw requests for proposals for a number of things out there which were pretty reasonable, straightforward.

I saw one that I thought was good. There were some changes made by the government to the Family Support Plan Act, so there were some new provisions that applied. They said, "Here are some open houses where legal people free of charge will explain to you what the implications are of the government changes," all very reasonable. There is some tourism promotion that takes place, particularly outside of this province — in the United States and Europe and other places — which extols the virtues of Ontario, very reasonable.

But the whiz kids have to get hold of this, the smart people, not necessarily the members of this House but the whiz kids, and they say, "We've got something smarter; why don't we use all of this for our own purposes," and you get a document like this. There's no way. I hope everybody in Ontario who gets this in the mailbox will realize that this is just Progressive Conservative Party propaganda.

If you paid for it, if the party sent it out, there's nothing wrong with that. That's part of the process. I accept that. I see that during the election campaign all of us produce material. The people will make their judgement. Nothing wrong with that. It's exactly the way our democratic system works. What I object to is government abusing its power, abusing its role and using an agency which I think has potential to really be helpful to Ontario: the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board. I thought that here's something that can be helpful.

All of us hope for good things to happen in Ontario. We all do, whether you're sitting on that side or this side, because we represent people in our communities. We want them to do well. We'll argue over some things in this House from time to time. Sometimes the differences on certain issues may not be great, on other issues they may be greater. But this is a complete abuse of public power. This is nothing but blatant propaganda and taxpayers' dollars are used for it, and that means people who support the party or support the government and those who do not.

By gosh, you've done well in your fund-raising. Congratulations to you. That's what you should use.

We had a Days of Action day in St Catharines last Friday and some of the Conservative members locally put an ad in the paper, from their point of view — I didn't agree with the contents, but they put their ad in about what they thought was the government position and why they thought it was good — paid for, I presumed, by the Conservative Party. No objection to that; that's the way it should work. But I think you people yourselves, for the sake of the system, never mind the partisanship, should stop all governments, whether it's this or any future government, from this kind of nonsense. Because this is initiated, not by members of this House but by smart people, the clever, whiz kids who sit in the back room thinking of all the things they can do. I prefer to listen to you members in the House put forward your point of view. Sometimes I don't agree with it, sometimes it may annoy me, sometimes it may make me amused, but that's the democratic system and that's what we should do. This is exactly an abuse.

Something else came out. I saw an ad in various newspapers, my own as well, which said, "Request for proposals for new nursing home beds." There's nothing wrong with putting that out, because if you want those proposals, you want to get that information. But they couldn't do it just alone. They had to put in a propaganda message as part of it, the same as Ontario savings bonds. I want people to purchase Ontario savings bonds because it helps our province, but then you get the ad in there. There's an ad in the paper, and there should be ads in the paper, telling people where they can purchase them and what the return will be and so on. But do you know what the ad has to say? It has to have propaganda, "You'll be investing in the best economy," and so on. It's the political message which I think is wrong, not the ad itself, just as I think you people have allocated \$50 million for a plan to promote Ontario abroad. That's a good investment I think. It can be a good investment in that regard as long as you don't use it for the wrong purposes.

I look at one thing that still continues to concern a lot of people in our part of the province, and that is, the promise that the Premier made during the last election campaign. He made a promise during the leaders' debate. He was asked by Robert Fisher of Global news, who was one of the panellists, "This health care plan that you have, Mr Harris, will it involve the closing of hospitals?" Mike Harris said exactly this, "Certainly I can guarantee you, Robert, it is not my plan to close hospitals." Thirty-five hospitals have closed, and more are on the block.

I don't think, with an aging population, we can afford to close hospitals. Yes, we need more long-term-care beds. We're going to get those, and I'm pleased to see that we are going to get those. But what we need as well is acute care. Because when people are elderly, when all of us get older, we are more likely to require acute care as well as chronic care. So we've got to have that. We've got to have that emergency care. I find that when you talk to

people out there they're prepared to see their dollars invested in it.

You people rushed headlong into the tax cut, and I know there was a debate within the party whether you should do it. Really, if you're going to implement tax cuts, I think you have to do it after you've balanced the budget, because then you don't have to borrow the money to balance the budget. What I find odd with the Conservative group of people is that the debt has gone up from \$89 billion to \$105 billion with this government in power. Now, not all of that could you control. I want to be fair to you. Part of that was going to go up anyway because we are running a deficit, but I think you could have eliminated that deficit faster if you had forgone the income tax cut. You would have had that revenue coming in.

I know the talking notes the government has say that you're supposed to give credit to the tax cut and, as I say, most people like to have a tax cut of some kind. But really it amounts to — and I don't want to give any government any particular credit — the fact that you have low interest rates in the US, low interest rates in Canada, and a low Canadian dollar, which allows —

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: Good question. I wish I had more time to explain this to the minister. He mentions BC.

We do a lot more trade with the United States than any other province. If you look at it, Canada is first as a trading partner to the US. Second, it would be Ontario. We do a tremendous amount of trade with the United States and therefore when their economy is booming and they're making purchases and they have low interest rates, that really helps us. The same thing happened to the Liberal government when it was in power from 1985 to 1990. We were fortunate that the American economy was doing exceedingly well at that time. We had little bit higher interest rates, but the American economy was doing well.

Don't be fooled yourselves into thinking the tax cuts have that effect. They'll make people politically happy, but I'm convinced there are other factors which are equally important, and perhaps when I respond to some comments I'll be able to deal with those then.

1640

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Comments and questions?

Mr Silipo: I want to just do a couple of things in the two minutes I have. The first is to express, as other have done, my best wishes to the member for Riverdale, the Deputy Speaker, on her birthday today and to congratulate her as she and my colleagues are celebrating somewhere in this building.

The second is to say in response directly to the member for St Catharines, someone I always find very useful to listen to, that he has outlined very well what's wrong with the approach Mike Harris has taken. I know this is an area he has always been particularly interested in: He also talked about the way in which government goes about advertising what it's doing and his views on that. I think we share a lot of the same positions on that.

I just have one comment or question directly to the member for St Catharines, and that is, being a stickler, as he is, for the rules of this place and the procedures of this place, I was a little bit surprised he did not comment at all on what really is technically the first and foremost thing in front of us today, which is the amendment to the amendment that we have moved. I really am interested in hearing his thoughts, to the extent that he can in the rebuttal, as to whether he will support the amendment we have put, which I remind him and others is "that the government's phoney tax scheme will continue to cause damage to Ontario's health care, education and other vital services until reversed by a future government."

The reason I raise that is that I know we have some different points of view and I would very much appreciate hearing his view on why it is that even though he and his caucus are against the Harris tax cut, they in fact would leave it in place — which I think is the position they have taken — and why it is that if they are so against that, as we are, and if they believe it's helping to destroy the very fabric of this province, they would not see that that has to be taken back at least to some extent to be able to fund back into the services of health care and education, among others that we need.

Mr Hastings: It's rather interesting at times to hear from the member for St Catharines — the millionaire member for St Catharines — talking about political propaganda and his hope for the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board and how tax reductions are not a good idea; that a tax addiction, though, that his party has had for 10 years — I'd like to go back and place his comments back in the Peterson years when we're talking about significant tax increases over those years.

The rate of growth back in the mid-1980s was about 3.5% to 4%, yet the Peterson government spent four times that amount — 16% expenditure for most of those five years. That's the ramp-up to the problem we ended up having June 8, 1995.

If they had managed things much more effectively, if they had reined in expenditures at even only 6% compared to the economic growth rate of those days at 4%, we wouldn't have the problems we have today that we're trying to grapple with. But nobody in those days was thinking ahead to what was happening in the millennium. No, we wouldn't want to do that, so we had over those years 33 crazy tax increases for questionable — actually, what I would call phoney — reasons.

You want to talk about political propaganda. If we went back and looked at some of the ads put out by this member, who was heading up the environment ministry, they were nothing but sheer political Liberal propaganda at its worst.

Mr David Caplan (Orillia): I'm very pleased to join the debate. I'd like to thank my colleague from St Catharines for a most excellent presentation. It is interesting that we always talk about numbers. On page 72 and throughout the budget there are these little snippets about what the total tax savings will be to individuals because of

the actions of the government. I would point out that I was looking at page 72. I thought it was very interesting.

It talks about a single student whose net income is \$16,500. It goes on to say in the postscript — I know the member is very interested to learn this — "A single student attends university full-time for eight months. Annual tuition is \$4,000 and ancillary fees are \$500." That's kind of out the window with yesterday's announcement from the Minister of Education on deregulation of tuition. "This student earns \$16,500 as a waiter, working full-time during the summer and part-time while attending school." This tax cut is going to save this student \$435 over four years, so that is about \$100 a year this student is going to get. Of course their tuition fees, and all members I know would be interested in this, are going up \$3,000 in one year.

This is the amazing thing: Mike Harris has said, "You're a student in Ontario, we'll give you a hundred bucks a year, because that's your share of the tax cut, but boy, are we going to take it away on the other hand with enormous fee increases." That's not unusual because from Mike Harris and Ernie Eves this is an assault on the middle class of Ontario. These people are just sticking it to the middle class and to families and to students, and somebody has to say that enough is enough.

Mr Gerretsen: I wanted to make a comment with respect to the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale about the millionaire status of some members in this House.

Let it never be forgotten that it was your government that changed the pension rules of the individuals who are here, and that there are members of each and every party who benefited from that tremendously, including the Premier. He got \$840,000 as a payout. Mr Eves got over \$800,000 as a payout. I think the people of Ontario ought to know that if you had changed the pension plan so that the old pension plan would have been in effect for the people who were here once they retired, those large payouts that your government approved would not have been necessary. The people of Ontario ought to know that because it meant that another \$50 million had to be put into the pension plan in order to pay this out to the 60 or 70 members who benefited from it.

The way I look at it when people ask me about it is I always say: "The way they used to pay people around here, it was kind of like a sports contract. There were deferred payments involved. You got \$45,000 or \$50,000 while you were here now, and \$40,000 or \$50,000 per year, as long as you were here for five years, for the rest of your life."

When you think about it, for some of those members who were here for 15 years, taking out \$840,000 works out to over \$50,000 per year. It is wrong for this government to have done that. There would have been other, much better ways to deal with the pension situation for the old members. Now, for a member of the government that approved this to start taking a shot at members of the opposition who didn't control the situation to start off with, because you are the government that

passed those new rules and regulations, I think is totally terrible, and you know I'm right.

The Acting Speaker: The member for St Catharines has two minutes to respond.

Mr Bradley: I appreciate the remarks which are always a response. I like this part of the rules which have been initiated where members have a chance to respond.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Did I miscount? The Chair recognizes the member for St Catharines in rebuttal.

Mr Bradley: Thank you very much for the opportunity to respond.

I first of all want to respond to my friend from Dovercourt to say that I have watched with a good deal of interest the tricky wording that is used in each resolution now or each amendment. I've always felt that you should never get caught with tricky wording. That's what you always have to know.

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You know me: I tend to know where the enemy is. I don't attack them. But I was looking this morning to see the New Democrats voting en masse against a motion from a government member, and when I looked around they were like Casper the ghost: They had disappeared. I don't even attack the NDP, because they have few members and the government has a massive number of members. This morning I thought, "Well, they have opposed the tax breaks, so I can count on the NDP," and I turned this way and there was no — we're not supposed to say who is here and who is not. I'll just say they were Casper the ghost, all of them. I couldn't find any of them. I understand that. I understand why the NDP did that. I'm not critical of that at all.

It's a matter of timing. When you have a surplus, you're in a much better position to be allocating tax cuts than you are when you are not running a surplus. I think that's what small-c conservative people are saying.

I was waiting for somebody to mention the gambling initiatives of this government. I think one of the most backward steps taken by this government has been moving massively into government gambling, particularly into the slot machines, and now trying to shove into various municipalities the new Mike Harris gambling halls which you refer to as charity casinos. I suspect a good half of the government caucus agrees with me on that.

The Acting Speaker: It has been mentioned several times about our well wishes for the member for Riverdale on the occasion of her birthday. Our wishes for this special day should also go to the member for London South, I believe. Happy birthday.

Further debate?

Mr Silipo: I certainly echo your best wishes on his birthday to the member for London South.

I'm happy to have an opportunity to join in this debate and to just say a couple of things.

We've made the point, and will continue to make the point, that what we see in this budget is really a lot of nice packaging, a lot of fancy packaging, a lot of good packaging, to be honest about it. Yet when we look behind

the packaging or inside the packaging, when we begin to unravel what's in the contents, we then see that the truth, both in terms of what actually is happening out there and even in terms of what is reflected in the numbers themselves and in the documents themselves, doesn't quite mesh with the initial rhetoric.

The packaging is nice. It's like the salesperson who says: "Don't pay us. It's a don't-pay-a-cent event. You don't pay now." It's the pretense that somehow you're saving a lot of money, but the reality at the end of the day is that you're going to have to pay for it at some point.

We continue to feel that what the government is doing is wrong. We have been clear in saying that time after time. But it's not just a question of saying to the government and saying to Ontarians that the Mike Harris view of the world is wrong. It's a question of seeing to what extent this government is now going as they try to change their image, as they try to show, as we get to the end of the third year of their mandate, that somehow they have a softer image, that somehow they're listening, that somehow they now care about the programs, the services in health care and education which they have torn to shreds with their actions over the first two and a half to three years of their mandate.

Even within the budget document, we have to point, and can point quite easily, to some of those glaring inconsistencies, to those real, clear oppositions between what they, in their rhetoric, say they are doing and what they are actually doing.

The easiest place for me to start is in what the Minister of Finance is telling us in this budget. He trumpets the virtue of the fact that the economy is improving and the economy is growing. With that we agree and with that we quite frankly rejoice. We're happy, as we all should be, regardless of partisan stripe, that the economy is improving.

But one of the first things when you look at the numbers — and this is a budget discussion, so we have to talk a little bit about numbers, although we can go much beyond the numbers and talk about the reality that's out there for people. But when you look at the numbers, one of the first thing that jumps out at you is here is a government and a Minister of Finance who are telling us on the one hand that the economy has improved, that the economy is going to continue to improve, yet what does he tell us is going to happen with respect to income that's going to come into the coffers of the government from income taxes? He's actually wanting us to believe that it's going to go down. So he's projecting growth in the economy, but then he turns around and says, "By the way, under the personal income tax in particular we're going to get less revenue in the fiscal year that we're just starting than we did in the last fiscal year."

Of course, all of us know, and certainly the Minister of Finance knows, that's not true. He calls it being fiscally prudent and underestimating, being cautious. We know that it is just another part of the shell game that goes on and that we've seen now for a couple of years, where he purposely underestimates the revenue in order to continue

to create the impression that the belt-tightening has to go on, that the cuts have to go on. Then he'll come in three and four months from now and say, "Oh, by the way, the reconciliation has come in on the personal income tax and the other tax side from the federal government and, lo and behold, we found another \$1 billion."

We've seen that game played now for a couple of years; we're going to see it again this year. You cannot have anybody believe that with a growing economy the revenues coming into the government are going to be less in this fiscal year than they were in the fiscal year that just ended, yet that's what the numbers show.

If it was only that, we could say: "Well, those are just the quirks of the accounting system that allow the Minister of Finance to do that. That's just the way in which he's able to play out the latitude that he has and to give himself the room so he can look good three, four, five and six months down the line." But it's worse than that, because when you look again behind the veneer of the cover of the budget, you actually begin to see the reality as people out there see it. There are couple of other examples that we have highlighted which we'll continue to mention.

Jobs: The government for the first time is saying that they will meet the 725,000 jobs. In fact, the Minister of Finance says they'll actually exceed that. Time will tell. What we can say with growing certainty on the strength not only of our view of how things should be, but in the view of many economists across this province and across this country, is that what the government claims is not true; that is, it is not the tax cut that is causing the growth in the economy and the growth in jobs. That may have a small role. I think you can argue whether it does or not. But the reality is, according to many economists, that there are many other factors that go into the growth that we have seen and the improvements in the economy. They would list the tax cut, if at all, as one of the last factors in that economy growing.

They are saying that it isn't the tax cut that's causing that growth, so we have to ask, "If it's not, then what's the point of doing it? What's the point of doing it when again on the numbers it's adding billions of dollars to the provincial debt, by some estimates as much as \$30 billion?" Again, we can argue about some of those numbers, but even government members and the Minister of Finance would have to admit that they are borrowing this money that they are giving out in the tax cut. It's not as if they have it as surplus. So in borrowing it, you're adding that piece on top of the amounts that would be there in the annual deficit to the debt of the province — and this from a government that says they are against deficit financing and increasing the debt, yet they are increasing the debt, not just by things they could say are not of their doing, but they are increasing the debt directly as a result of actions they are taking — another reason why we say, "Why would you then do the tax cut?"

When you then look at what happens to the tax cut in terms of who gains the benefit from that, as our leader very clearly delineated earlier, it isn't the typical family that receives the benefits of the tax cut. It may surprise

even people in this Legislature to know that about half of the taxpayers of this province earn less than \$35,000. Half of the taxpayers of the province are under that income. For them, there's very little in the way of benefits in the tax cut. They're going to actually be paying out more through the other things that Mike Harris used to call taxes and now he says are no longer taxes, things like user fees for a variety of municipal services, increases in property taxes that will take place across the province, the copayment for medicines if you are a senior or someone on social assistance, not to mention what will happen with respect to tuition fees if you have children in college or university — not only with respect to tuition fees, the ones that will hit all students in post-secondary education, the roughly \$500 a year increase that we've seen for the last couple of years on tuition fees, but in fact the announcement that we saw made just yesterday that will mean that in the professional faculties — medicine, law, engineering and many others — the government has completely opened the door now to let universities charge what they want to charge.

1700

So again, what's going to happen for families who are half the taxpayers of the province? They're not going to see much benefit out of this tax cut. They're going to actually be paying more. That is also true as you go up the income bracket. Even families that are in the \$50,000 and \$60,000 range, at the end of the day, depending on their circumstance, are not going to see any real benefit from the tax cut. That's another reason why we say there is no sense, common or otherwise, to this tax cut.

Then we come to the third and probably even more significant reason for why we think the tax cut, which is at the heart of what the Harris government is doing, is so wrong, and that is that the cost, not just in dollars, as I've indicated, and in terms of increasing the debt, but also in terms of what it means out there for people on a day-to-day basis, is just quite frankly too harsh to bear. The cost has been seen and is being felt day by day out there in our services.

It's being felt in a huge way in our health care system. In community after community in this province we have seen and continue to see, unfortunately, examples of problems in our hospitals, problems in many of our other service areas in the health care system, again resulting from a government that set out to simply cut, as opposed to restructure, that called what they were doing restructuring but in effect what we saw was simply cutting. They didn't put in place a plan to have community-based services in place first, before taking the money out of the hospital sector and before making sure that there was an ability to move from an institutional-based system to a more community-based system.

In the area of long-term care, an area that affects many of our seniors and others across this province, the government has the audacity to come in a few weeks ago with what they say is a major announcement, \$1.2 billion, to be invested in long-term care. Then you read the second sentence and that's where you find that it is, by the way,

over eight years. What does it mean for next year and the year after? What does it mean now that the problems are out there? It might mean another \$100 million, if that gets spent. Again, the pattern of this government has been so clear: They like to announce new spending and then we never see it. A year later, when we check the books to try to figure out how much of that was spent, not much of it was there.

Had this government believed seriously and sincerely in the need for long-term care, then they wouldn't have and shouldn't have shut down the investment in that area that we had begun a full two years before our mandate was over. They cancelled the program. You cancelled it. You can quibble about why you did it and how you did it, but that's the reality. Now you're saying, three years into the mandate: "By the way, we need to reinvest back into health care. Aren't we great, that now we're doing it." If you had done it before —

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): You tried to spend money you didn't have.

Mr Silipo: The Minister of Community and Social Services said, "You tried to spend money you didn't have." Where are you getting the money from, Minister? You're getting it exactly the same place we did: by borrowing it and from the taxpayers of the province. You don't have a surplus yet. It's not like you've got millions of dollars sitting on the shelf. Maybe you do. Maybe you know something we don't.

The point is, had they been serious about wanting to reinvest, then they would have continued. If they wanted to philosophically or otherwise make some changes to the nature of the program, that's their prerogative, they could have done that. But there is no justification for them, having cut the funding, having cut the programs, now to come in three years later and expect us and expect the people of Ontario to praise them for reintroducing something that they cut three years ago.

That, of course, is typical of the way in which they have been behaving. That is typical of the way in which they have been going, as was a small but important example that we highlighted the other day with respect to the whole job situation, the example that we gave of Babcock and Wilcox Canada.

The Premier put out nice big ads in the newspapers saying: "Good on you, Babcock and Wilcox. Your success is bringing new jobs into Ontario." We're happy that they're growing. It was in fact the first in the list of success stories in this other glossy document that was part of the budget, in which again they say that this is a good company, with international contracts etc.

Again, we're happy that the government is congratulating this and other companies about the fact that they have in this case increased by 250 people, but I think you have to ask yourself, why is the story not just that? Why is it that when we look beyond that, the government is taking credit for the 250 new jobs but yet they refuse completely to acknowledge, let alone take responsibility for, the fact that during their mandate, directly as a result of a deal that

fell through that was announced by the Premier of this province, Mike Harris, in 1996, this same company lost 825 jobs? This company had more employees when the NDP was in government, 1,700 employees, versus now.

It's a small example, as I say, but it is typical of the attitude. The reason we raise it is not in any way to diminish either the importance of this company or its contribution to the Ontario economy nor to in any way diminish the fact that we're happy. We are happy about the fact that they are growing again, but they are still far behind where they were. All we're saying to the government is, please don't insult the intelligence of the people of this province with these half stories, if not half truths. Tell the whole story.

Hon Mr Leach: We created 350,000.

Mr Silipo: I say to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, as I said to the Minister of Finance the other day, I'm happy to argue the job growth numbers and we'll continue to see it and the reasons that is happening. If you want to talk about that, I'll be happy to talk about that, but what I'm saying here, and I know there are things that the government members in particular don't want to hear, is they ought not to tell these half stories, if not half truths. They ought to have the decency and the courage to tell the whole story.

They ought to tell people, for example, that in the health care budget that they continue to trumpet as increasing, there are some large sums of money, and we'll find out over the next few weeks as the estimates numbers come out and as we look at them whether it's \$800 million, whether it's \$1 billion or whether it's \$1.5 billion. Somewhere in that range, that amount of money is sitting there, having been announced by the government, having been put in previous years in the budgets and yet not spent. So when they say, "We have increased spending for health care," on the books maybe they have, but in reality, in terms of services, they have not.

That amount of money and a lot more is there in restructuring, so the great irony we have is that even where they are increasing in the health care area, they are increasing in terms of helping to pay for that restructuring as opposed to helping to pay for the services that need to be provided.

In wrapping up, let me just come to one final point, and that is that I think it's fair, as people continue to listen to those of us among the Liberal Party and the NDP talk about and criticize what the Harris government is doing, people begin more and more to ask us: "Well, you guys are always just saying 'no.' What is it that you would do differently?" I think it's a fair question. It's a question that we have to address more and more.

1710

We have begun to do that. We have begun to say to people that for us our health services and health care and education and social services, whether they're services for children or people with developmental disabilities and the whole array of other services, are so crucial, are so important that we believe that in order to properly fund

those services, we would need to look at taking back a portion of the Mike Harris tax cut.

We have said that we would take back the portion of the tax cut that goes to the top 6% of income earners, people who make over \$80,000, who represent only a small fraction of the population of Ontario but who get a large portion of the tax benefit that Mike Harris is putting in place, that being to the tune of \$1.5 billion, which we believe needs to be reinvested and can be reinvested and should be reinvested in our health care system, in our school system, where we're going to see problems — if I had more time I would be happy to talk more about that — in spades over the next year, year and a half.

School boards are looking now at school closures, at cuts they have to make. Many school boards are finding that the ministry of education has overestimated their enrolment and so had told them they were going to get more money than they're going to get. The cuts are going to be more severe right across the province and we're going to see that unfold over the next six months to a year in a very big way.

We have begun the process of saying to people that not only do we believe that this tax cut which is at the heart of what Mike Harris is doing is wrong, we actually have gone the next step, which I note that my Liberal colleagues are not prepared to do, to say we would take back some of that tax cut, because we think that only in that way can we afford to pay for the very vital services that Ontarians need and deserve.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I'd like to compliment the member for Dovercourt for exposing the many aspects that the budget does not contain. If there is one very open matter that has come from the Premier and a lot of the cabinet members and many other members as well, it is that they have not been able to communicate to the public the good things they have done. The problem they are having is that they haven't done much good. That is why they have problems communicating the good news.

Other than packaging a coloured budget depicting very nice figures and stuff like that, once you look inside, there isn't really much for real people of Ontario. I won't take away some of the merits of the government with respect to the business community because yes, they tend to cater so much to that. But I would like to say to the members present in the House that Ontario is composed of a variety of people, and the House is represented at the same time by a variety of members from different parts of the province.

Unless the government and the members understand that unless you take care of those people who cannot take care of themselves, the government is not doing a good job, I have to say that the government is not doing a good job, because it's continuing to pick on the two weakest groups of people in our community: the youth and the seniors. To the youth it's saying, "You students go to your university or college and tell them that you're going to get a loan." To the seniors it's saying, "If you can't afford to stay in your house, go ahead and get a mortgage."

Once we do not look after those two particular people, and I don't have time to go into youth unemployment, there is nothing in this budget for those people.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I'm pleased to respond to the member for Dovercourt. He covered a number of areas in his presentation with which I'm in total agreement. I wanted in particular to pick up on the issue of tuition deregulation particularly for graduate programs and some of the professions. I hope, with some reflection, the government might see the error of its ways here.

Let me make this very personal. I'm someone who comes from a family of modest income, my background. I had an honour and an opportunity to attend university. I don't believe I could have pursued the studies I did if I had been at that time staring down the pipe of the future, looking at a debt load that our students of today will be looking at, at the end of it.

I don't believe I would have had the courage to take on that kind of debt load. I don't believe that with the experience of our family we would have felt that was doable or appropriate. I think we would have sadly chosen another route for me and my future.

I think of a person I know who went through post-secondary education and graduate engineering, and who chose at the end of that to pursue work in northern and remote Canada in aboriginal communities, to work on building much-needed infrastructure, and who also worked in the field of international development, who took those skills and did good work in the world, but who was not paid the large incomes that many of the members across the floor seem to be alluding to today as rationale for these kinds of exorbitant tuitions.

I hope the government realizes that what it's doing is ensuring that those in this province who will have access to the highest levels of education are only those who have the highest levels of income, and that that's wrong.

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): I am pleased to be able to rise and respond to the comments that have been made by my colleague from one of the 416 areas. I know he would not want me to forget to make some comments about at least third-party endorsements that will have some significance for him.

It was yesterday that I listened to some comments on CFRB that have been repeated on several occasions since. They were the words of a man who is charged with the responsibility of leading this metropolitan area, Mel Lastman. He is a person I know my colleague from Dovercourt holds in high esteem. He has spoken of him on many occasions and reflected on his words of wisdom on many occasions. His summary of the budget was, "This is the greatest budget ever." I think we need to remember that. "This is the greatest budget ever."

Interjections.

Mr Shea: Let me tell you, if you really have a problem dealing with what Mayor Lastman has to say — and if you do, I say, "Shame on you" — let me simply turn to another statement. "Because of the budget," says Mayor Lastman, "this is going to be boomtown Canada." In fact

he then turned his attention to the Liberals and said, "It is time for the federal government to get its act together and to do what the provincial government is now doing." He was speaking particularly of taxes. He is sick and tired of tax-and-spend kind of legislation. I hope my Liberal colleagues in this House will take that message to heart.

If they are finding it difficult to accept the words of Mayor Lastman, let me remind them of John Bech-Hansen's comment, "This is overwhelmingly good news for Toronto."

So I say to my colleague from Dovercourt, who I know tries to represent our area well, that he'll take that to heart and that he'll understand the importance of this budget for the people of 416.

Mr Caplan: I must admit I am always enthralled by the comments of the member for High Park-Swansea, but very selective in quoting the esteemed mayor of our city. I recall a few months ago the mayor had less than kind words to say about the Premier. In fact, I believe he called into question the commitments the Premier had made to him. I would like the member to stand up and make some of those quotes known to this House. I would, but I know it's not parliamentary language to be used in here.

More to the point, the member for Dovercourt made some excellent points. The reason that Ontario, indeed Canada, is enjoying a great deal of economic prosperity has to do with the very sound management of our federal government. They have chosen an approach where they've got their finances under control, where they have eliminated a deficit have put us on track to be able to make choices as far as increasing spending and cutting taxes are concerned. They've made those kinds of choices possible. It's also the low-interest-rate policies of the federal government which have made this possible, which have removed a lot of the burden.

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It's very interesting that the member did not point this out, but I know he would not want to be remiss in ensuring that those facts are very well known. Of course, the wellbeing of our neighbours to the south, our biggest trading partner, is certainly a big factor in how well we're doing. I know the members opposite are congratulating Mr Martin, as they did, by the way, when they wrote their election platform. It said how they endorse the policies of the federal Liberal government. I think they should congratulate our federal cousins.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. The member for Dovercourt has two minutes to respond.

Mr Silipo: I really appreciate the array of comments I've received. Let me just say, without selecting any individual members, that I continue to like the mayor of Toronto. I happen to agree with him on some days in terms of what he says, and I shudder sometimes on the basis of what he says. This is actually something I know I share with the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Ms Lankin: On different days.

Mr Silipo: On different days. We don't react perhaps the same way to the same statements made by the mayor of Toronto.

That aside, there are just a couple of points I would make. To my Liberal colleagues, I would say you're right, and had time allowed, I would have acknowledged it. I think I did, though maybe not in as much detail as you would have liked me to, point out that one of the things economists are saying more and more that is leading to the job growth is the low-interest policies. Given that we've been critical in the past of that approach, we have to give credit and say that we're happy there is now at least an approach to keep interest rates low, and we hope that continues.

Mr Shea: That and the 69-cent dollar.

Mr Silipo: The low dollar is another element. But I say to my Liberal colleagues that they also would want me to tell the whole story and say I was a little bit puzzled when I saw the equally spiffy packaging that was put together by my Liberal colleagues. Here, we can show them. Sure. Here we go. There it is.

But what was really interesting was one chart on the inside, where they praise the federal government for having reduced its deficit. They contrast that against the Mike Harris government. They of course don't mention that one of the reasons the federal government has managed to reduce its budget is in fact the cutting of transfers to provinces, certainly including Ontario, in terms of health care and education. Not that this in any way should excuse what the current Harris government is doing, but it is also a matter of public record.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Given that there are 365 days in the year and 130 members of this Legislature, it's passing strange that we would have not just one member have a birthday today, not just two; we have three. Many happy returns of the day should go to Ted Chudleigh. Our congratulations to the member for Halton North.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm not sure if it's parliamentary. I think you're out of order, but I do appreciate the sentiment.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): It's my pleasure as the member for Scarborough Centre to join the debate on the budget here today and to talk about the good news that was created in the budget of this week and the fact that some 341,000 net new private sector jobs have been created in this province since this government took office in June 1995.

I want to talk about the effect this has on my riding of Scarborough Centre, and especially the effect it has had on small business people in my riding. As I drive along Kingston Road or Eglinton or Midland Avenue or Brimley Road in my riding, McCowan Road, Danforth Road, I see the new businesses that have opened up in this riding and see the effect that our 30% reduction in income tax rates has had to date.

In June 1995, the provincial income tax rate in this province was 58% of the federal income tax rate, and today, proposed in the budget, we'll have the lowest provincial income tax rate in this province at 40.5%,

which is keeping our commitment to reduce personal income tax rates in this province by 30%, something the opposition parties, the people who oppose what this party stands for, said could not be done. We are keeping our word on cutting taxes in this province.

Something else that was interesting in the budget was the fact that there's going to be assistance for those municipalities that have higher than average education taxes on the commercial and industrial side. There's going to be money over the next few years, over \$500 million, going towards those municipalities, which includes the municipality of Toronto and others such as Owen Sound and Niagara Falls. Kenora is one of those municipalities as well.

The effect it will have in my riding of Scarborough Centre is that it will ultimately reduce the amount of property tax paid by business owners, which will make them more competitive and allow them to hire more people.

What has been proposed in this budget is 36 tax cuts — those are tax cuts, not tax hikes —and we take that with the previous two budgets the finance minister brought forward in which there were 30 tax cuts. So 30 tax cuts in the first two years and 36 tax cuts proposed in this budget is 66 tax cuts, if you can imagine that.

I reflect back on my own riding and see that during the 10 years from 1985 to 1995, when we had governments headed by the Liberal and New Democratic parties in this province, what we saw was 65 tax increases. Those were 65 increases in taxes which did nothing for job creation in this province. What we have here are 66 tax cuts that are producing jobs. To date, 341,000 jobs have been created as a result of the policies of this government within this province.

If we look at the five years from 1990 to 1995, there were actually 32 tax hikes on the part of the previous NDP government. If we look at it in terms of the job creation numbers, this province actually lost 10,000 jobs. There were 10,000 fewer people working in this province from the year 1990 to the end of 1995. So it was a loss of 10,000 jobs.

We're seeing positive job creation as a result of tax cuts. It's wonderful to see that as of July 1, 1998, when the last phase of the personal income tax reduction is put in place, our province will actually have the lowest personal income tax rate in all of Canada. In three years we will have gone from the highest at 58% of federal to the lowest at 40.5%. This is very significant because what's happening is that the hardworking people of this province who earn their paycheques in the first place are actually getting an opportunity to keep more of that money. They're getting an opportunity to keep more of what they earned in the first place.

I look at what effect that has on my riding in Scarborough. I see that as people have more money in their pockets, some are choosing to invest it and many are choosing to spend it. There are many items they have been putting off purchasing. I can see as I pass Marvin Starr Pontiac Buick on Eglinton Avenue, on my way to Queen's

Park every day, that there are more and more truckloads of vehicles being unloaded on to the lot. Those vehicles are being sold or leased to people across the city of Toronto, many of them to people in my riding who are buying new vehicles.

I see the effect the income tax reduction, among the other tax reductions, has had on people choosing to go to restaurants. As I was going to work the other day, I saw a sign at Hennessey's restaurant on Eglinton and it said: "Hiring more people. We're getting busier."

More people are spending those dollars, they're spending them in their own communities and they're creating jobs. I think it's important to remember that 82% of all the new jobs created in this province are created by small business. When you look at the 341,000 job number, yes, there have been a lot of large new plant openings across this province, but the majority of those 341,000 jobs are small business owners.

I look at other new restaurants that have opened in my riding, like Tony Pepperoni or Under the Sun. These were vacant buildings. They sat vacant. To see today that these are thriving businesses that are employing a lot of people, that are paying property tax and provincial taxes, to see this positive investment happening in my riding is so important, because I know it's happening in the ridings of Etobicoke-Humber and Bruce, and right across this province I see that happening.

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I also look at the effect that the employer health tax has had on businesses in my riding and the fact that this government made a commitment to reduce the employer health tax on the first \$400,000 of payroll, that that will actually be accelerated with this budget and that those businesses with payrolls under \$400,000 will no longer have to pay the employer health tax. That employer health tax on \$400,000 is roughly \$7,200 in savings to those businesses. But equally important not only in terms of the dollars they save in not having to pay that employer health tax is the time spent filling out all those unnecessary forms that our small business owners are faced with, actually allowing them to spend more time to grow their businesses so that they can see more positive results throughout their businesses. So the budget has had positive effects in my riding.

One of the other things the budget talked about is the reduction in the deficit, that the deficit is down to \$5.2 billion. If we look back to 1995, I think on this side of the House we were all absolutely stunned when we saw that the figure was \$11.3 billion in this province, that that was the deficit of this province. We were actually spending \$11.3 billion a year more than we were taking in revenue. That was absolutely shocking not only to members on this side of the House, but I think to all Ontarians. The deficit now, at \$5.2 billion, is on track to be balanced in the year 2000-2001.

The budget also spoke about the highest 12-month job growth period ever in the history of the province, which was from February 1997 to February 1998. We had 265,000 new net private sector jobs created in this

province. This isn't even with the total tax cut. I know that perhaps a year from now when we are here, we will obviously see those job numbers go much higher when we see the full effect of a 30% tax reduction on the province of Ontario. If we look at how the Ontario economy is doing, it has stronger projected growth than any of the G-7 industrialized nations over the next three years. This is what has been predicted by many private sector economists.

Our 36 new job-creating tax cuts again total 66 in this budget just passed, as opposed to the 65 tax hikes brought upon by the governments headed by the Liberals and NDP from 1985 to 1995. I mentioned, as I know my friend from York East will want to know, the fact that we are cutting commercial and industrial education rates to affect ridings where we are, in York East, and my good friend from Etobicoke-Humber as well —

Mr Parker: And Eglinton.

Mr Newman: — and Eglinton as well, seeing that the commercial and industrial education tax rates have been cut. This is very important, and that will be phased in over an eight-year period.

The budget also spoke about opening dialogue with municipalities to look at further ways of reducing property taxes. I think that's something that all Ontarians want to see, further reductions in their property taxes, because we have seen that property taxes can indeed be cut.

There are many other initiatives within the budget to create job opportunities for youth and disabled Ontarians which I'm proud to say were in here.

On the education side, Mr Speaker, which I know is something of great interest to you, is the fact, as we had announced earlier, of \$583 million for new spending in the classroom by the year 2000 and the fact that there would be stable funding for elementary and secondary education for the next three years. I know that's something all Ontarians are pleased to see.

The budget also spoke about the \$1.2 billion being spent to ensure average class sizes of no larger than 25 for elementary and 22 for secondary students. It also spoke about the \$1 billion being spent to ensure funding for special education in this province. That's something I'm very proud to support in this budget.

There's been a lot of talk about textbooks. In my community of Scarborough there's talk about textbooks. To see that there's \$100 million in this budget for elementary textbooks and other learning materials is something I will be pleased to support, because that's something that will give our students an advantage, having those quality textbooks. The budget overall is very positive. It's positive for my riding of Scarborough Centre.

I see that the budget also spoke about the fact that we're emphasizing work and not welfare. When we look back to 1995, when the people of Ontario elected this government, one of the key platforms of election was reforming the welfare system. What we've seen to date is that 250,000 fewer people, a quarter of a million fewer people, today are dependent on welfare than in June 1995.

Mr Parker: One hundred thousand children.

Mr Newman: "One hundred thousand children," my good friend from York East mentions.

There are training and employment opportunities for 750,000 Ontarians yearly through a \$9.5-billion workplace training and employment plan that is included within the budget.

The income tax has been eliminated for 70,000 modest-income Ontario families, and I think that is very significant and will definitely help those individuals.

There's a new Ontario child care supplement for working families that will help some 350,000 young children in this province, and that again is something I am very pleased to support, and a 30% workplace child care tax deduction for the capital costs of the building or for expanding the onsite child care facilities or for contributions to facilities within the community. We're talking about the private sector spending money within their own facilities to provide day care or providing money within their own community for day care spaces. I think that's very important.

I look at health care within the budget, because health care is something I know you care about, Mr Speaker — it's something that I care about; in fact all members of this House and all Ontarians care about health care — to see that health care spending has been increased to \$18.5 billion a year, which is the greatest amount of money ever spent in this province on health care. Again, if we look back three years to 1995, we see that in this province we were spending \$17.4 billion on health care, and we see that over that time \$1.1 billion more was being spent on health care. That is a significant reinvestment. That works out to \$1,639 for every man, woman and child in this province.

The recent long-term-care announcement, which was a \$1.2-billion announcement to increase beds for seniors by 35% and to expand services for seniors and people with continuing care needs and children with disabilities, I was pleased to see that. I had the good fortune last Friday of making the announcement that 5,837 new beds over the next eight years would be allocated for the population of Toronto.

The budget also spoke about \$75 million being spent to open hospital beds during periods of peak demand, which is something that I'm pleased to see in this, and that there's increased training for critical care and emergency nurses as well.

I know the member for Wellington a couple of weeks ago had a private member's resolution on the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program, and in this budget I was pleased to see that program has been increased by \$10 million, to \$50 million by the year 2000-2001. The encouraging thing about this program is that it screens all newborns and identifies those at high risk and ensures that they receive the appropriate community services so that these children indeed have a good start in life.

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The budget also spoke about the establishment of a nursing services task force and the fact that \$300 million was going to be spent for medical equipment renewal —

that's something I was pleased to see in the budget — and another \$5 million is being spent to enhance community-based nursing care.

But the budget isn't just about health care, isn't just about cutting taxes; it's about people and their priorities. One of the priorities of the people of Scarborough and indeed across the province is personal safety, and the fact is that this budget commits \$150 million over five years on new community safety initiatives, and there is a community policing partnership with municipalities for hiring hundreds of new front-line police officers. I hope that many of those officers are available here in the city of Toronto for our residents and for our community.

There's a new OPP cadet training program, there's a rural crime prevention strategy, and very important is a multforce anti-biker gang squad that has been put into place with this budget. The budget also talks about the proposal to set fines at double the rate today for running red lights, which I believe would go from \$105 all the way up to \$210 for running red lights. That's very important.

I will be supporting this budget. It's a very good budget, not only for the people of Scarborough Centre but for all people in Ontario, with the fact that we have a strong economy, an economy that's getting even stronger today with our 66 tax cuts versus the 65 tax hikes of the previous two governments; the fact that we are on target to balance the budget in the year 2000-2001; and the fact that some 341,000 new net private sector jobs have been created since this government was elected by the people of Ontario almost three years ago.

The budget is indeed very positive. It's emphasizing work, not welfare. It talks about health care. It talks about the increased reinvestment in health care in this province. It talks about personal safety, education in the classroom, textbooks. These are all positive things we're seeing the effects of, not only in Scarborough Centre but across the province.

I think it was best said when it was said that a tax cut is the best job creation program ever invented. I believe that is true. I know there will be many more jobs created, not only in Scarborough Centre but across the province with this budget being passed.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I wanted to take the opportunity to make some quick comments. The member for Scarborough Centre was pretty bold in defending his government's position on the budget and there were lots of smiles were over there. I think this was the same government, the same party, that talked about how we cannot put our children in debt.

When this government took over in 1995, as you know, Mr Speaker — I know you were listening attentively — the debt of the province was \$89 billion. Their approach was to say, "We will not saddle our kids with debts in the future." Today it's \$105 billion. Tell me, who will be paying for that? The young children of tomorrow. Who will be saddled with higher tuition fees, lots of user fees? That \$105 billion is just as of today, and they've got

another year to go. Who pays for that? The poor, the most vulnerable.

For three years this party was so vicious, so unkind, so brutal with those who are vulnerable in our society. Those who were on welfare were being pushed off. Those who were disabled were being treated like second-class citizens. My golly, he woke up one day and said: "I am the compassionate Mike Harris today. Love me today. Forget the three years when I put all this brutal attack in a vicious manner on those people." Listen, what about those bodies lying on the ground? What about those you have left behind? He said, "Don't worry about those bodies. Just look at who is alive. Don't worry about the disabled."

When the members gets up in his defence, I would ask them to talk about what they are going to do with those people you have left behind and so brutally treated. I must love Mike Harris now?

Mrs Boyd: I too would like to respond to the member for Scarborough Centre and remind him that the increase in the total debt that my colleague from Scarborough North talked about was incurred and given to those who are most wealthy in the province. The phoney tax scheme benefits those at the upper end of the tax scale. I would just like to say to the people out there that when you talk about tax cuts, when you talk about that, the people who are paying might as well just take it right from their pockets and hand it to all those people who are the top earners in the province. They are not saving a cent in terms of this. They are paying, out of their lower income, user fees, all sorts of fees, increases in property tax, all those regressive areas that pay no attention to your ability to pay.

What is so fascinating about the defensiveness of this government, particularly the set and structured pieces that you are given to read about this budget, is that it takes no account of the reality of how this is going to affect the majority of people. You are so tied to big business, you are so tied to those that you see as the successful ones in the society. You are so immersed in an effort to try and transfer from the poor to the wealthy that you neglect the reality of the people you represent.

Yes, there have been improvements in the overall economy over the last few years. Why wouldn't there be, given that we went through a worldwide recession that accounts for most of the issues that you raised between 1990 and 1995?

Mr Parker: I listened with great interest to the remarks of my colleague for Scarborough Centre. I've also listened to the criticisms that have been levelled against his remarks and against the budget. I always find it interesting that those who choose to criticize this government for the tax cut and suggest that somehow it is a bonus to the wealthiest tax payers in this province always forget to mention the Fair Share health levy and the net effect of those two policies when they are put together. I don't quite understand why they do that, but that seems to be a common practice — sort of a very convenient amnesia when they discuss these matters.

But I was very interested in the remarks of my friend from Scarborough Centre. I thought he gave a very good synopsis, a very good review, of this week's budget. Representing a Toronto riding, as the member for Scarborough Centre does and as I do, we both are particularly pleased with the announcement in this week's budget concerning the commercial and industrial education tax. As you know, Toronto has historically paid higher education taxes than other taxpayers elsewhere in this province. Not more than all communities; other communities have also shared the extraordinary burden that Toronto taxpayers have carried, but Toronto has carried a historically high education tax burden. As you know, this government has now taken control of education tax away from the school boards and put the education tax one step further removed from the influence of the unions that have constantly applied pressure to keep the cost of education up and caused taxes to go up. These have been equalized now, thanks to this budget.

Mr Sergio: I am also happy to comment on the remarks by member for Scarborough Centre. If there is one thing I have to agree with in his comments, it is that he is looking after the people of the riding he represents. Everyone should be doing the same thing, and I know that everyone in this House is trying. He has commented specifically how the good news of the budget affects the people in his riding. That is indeed good news if that is the case.

But let me tell you that I have the same composition of people in my riding, and the biggest problem I have with the people in my riding is jobs. There is nothing in this budget here that alleviates the unemployment of the youth in our particular community. I think it's the same in many other areas.

Unfortunately, it is not his budget; it is not my budget. The budget is the way the Premier and Mr Eves see it here in Ontario, and they don't want to listen. They don't want to get it, that they are hurting the real people in Ontario, not the business community, because they can take care of themselves.

With all due respect to the member for York East, commenting on education taxes, my goodness, if we really want to bring some fairness to this bleeding system, let's not spread it over eight or 10 years. Let's do it now. Let's bring some relief now. Why continue this inequity? I would say that if the government was sincere in doing the right thing, they would have done it right now, not in eight years. That's what I would call listening to the people, listening to the business community and wanting to bring

some fairness where it doesn't exist, where it didn't exist for a number of years.

I would say to the member, continue to put pressure on Mr Eves, on the Premier, and do the right thing.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Scarborough Centre has two minutes to respond.

Mr Newman: It's my pleasure to respond to the members for Scarborough North, London Centre, York East and Yorkview and their comments. I know the members for Scarborough North and Yorkview get their marching orders from their leader. Their marching orders are not to talk about the good news, not to talk about all the new jobs that are being created in this province, not to talk about the prosperity that's happening within their own ridings.

All of a sudden, the member for Scarborough North is concerned about the debt. Where was he when he sat at the cabinet table under the David Peterson government? He talks about welfare and welfare reform and what we've done as a government. Look at this document here, the red book that the provincial Liberals ran under, to know that they were actually going to cut people's welfare by 30%. Some people in this province would have seen a 30% reduction in welfare on the part of a Liberal government. Their plan was called mandatory opportunity. Our plan is called real opportunity. That's the difference between this party and the Liberal Party.

I say to the member for London Centre, I appreciate your comments. You're always consistent. You're not like the Liberals; you are consistent. I know that you're against the tax cut. I know that you and your leader call the tax cuts phoney, but they're very real, and people in my riding and in your riding and all ridings across Ontario are seeing the benefit of tax cuts in this province.

The fact that you talked about big business — big business doesn't vote. Individuals do. Individuals vote in London Centre; individuals vote in Scarborough Centre; individuals vote across this province. It's the people of this province who elected the Conservative government to cut taxes, reduce the deficit and make Ontario once again the economic engine of Canada.

The member for York East always speaks so eloquently and makes common sense when he speaks.

I say to the member for Yorkview, I appreciate your comments as well and I know that your riding will benefit from the \$500-million reduction in business taxes.

The Acting Speaker: It being almost 6 o'clock, this House will adjourn until 1:30 o'clock, Monday, May 11.

The House adjourned at 1755.

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Monday 11 May 1998

Lundi 11 mai 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 11 May 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 11 mai 1998

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SUPPORT FOR THE DISABLED

Mr Gilles E. Morin (Carleton East): This is a government that promised it would not cut services to the disabled, a promise they have broken. When headlines are full of issues of more personal concern, it is easy to miss the plight of the neediest among us. In the tidal wave of the Common Sense Revolution, the erosion of support for the disabled has proceeded relentlessly, but without much fanfare.

On Saturday, the Ontario Coalition of Families Supporting People with Developmental Disabilities tried to correct that. Some 700 people gathered for a Mothers' Day march to ask the government to reverse \$50.4 million in cuts to developmental services.

Families are working extremely hard to keep their disabled children at home at great savings to the system, yet the supports they desperately need are being taken away as those savings are transferred to general government coffers.

Plainly, the government is balancing its books by cutting funding to disabled children while their parents are forced to beg for every scrap of assistance they can get. The Premier can respond to the obvious need of hepatitis C victims because it is politically wise to be perceived as caring and compassionate. Similar leadership would demand that the government do the right thing by the disabled, who are in great need but not yet in the national headlines.

JOHN P. ROBERTS RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Members of this Legislature have a rare privilege today, that of visiting a display that has been set up by the John P. Roberts Research Institute. The John P. Roberts institute is part of the London Health Sciences Centre and the University of Western Ontario. It operates as a very important centre for research and development. This is a privately directed centre and what it does is work on current issues in health care, using the knowledge that is formed out of the pure

research that is done to actually find applied research methods that help to build our new knowledge economy.

I'm very grateful that the scientists and the director, Dr Mark Poznansky, from the centre are here today. They want to meet with us as legislators to talk about the role of research and development, not only in terms of creating new knowledge, creating new and more effective means of health care, but also of the efforts to repatriate scientists who may not have found a home in Canada otherwise. They will be here for the rest of the day and hoping to meet with members of the Legislature around the initiatives that they are taking.

LOYALIST COLLEGE NURSING GRADUATES

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): I rise in the House today to congratulate Loyalist College nursing graduates who were once again 100% successful in the licensing exams set by the College of Nurses of Ontario.

The 29 graduates from the 1997 class as a group were at or exceeded the provincial average and exceeded the national average in all categories of competencies tested. The competencies included were assessment and planning skills, implementation and evaluation skills, communication skills and professional and personal responsibilities.

The three-year nursing diploma program at Loyalist combines a concentration of theory and practical experience in the health care setting. Learning experiences enable graduates to provide professional nursing care to clients of all ages with varying levels of health and illness.

I want to commend the faculty at Loyalist College whose skill and dedication to teaching has enabled so many students to reach their goals. It makes me very proud that the successful program is a part of our local community college. Of course, the nursing program is just one more example of the great job Loyalist College does in preparing students for the labour market.

I would like once again to congratulate the students in the program who, in passing their licensing exams, have demonstrated such a strong level of commitment to their chosen profession. Best wishes in the future.

TEMPÊTE DE VERGLAS

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell): Aujourd'hui, j'aimerais vous faire part de quelques commentaires sur les conséquences de la crise du verglas du mois de janvier dernier sur les citoyens et citoyennes de

ma circonscription. Certes, je n'ai pas à vous mentionner que la région de Prescott et Russell a été durement touchée par cette crise écologique.

Le 29 janvier dernier, le ministre de l'Agriculture procédait à la distribution de chèques de 1000 \$ et 2000 \$ aux agriculteurs. Lors de la remise de ces chèques, un employé très près du ministre et présent lors de la cérémonie en question déclarait ce qui suit :

«Les gens n'ont pas à s'inquiéter ; personne en Ontario ne sera perdant avec cette crise du verglas. Nous allons faire en sorte que toutes personnes touchées par cette crise seront indemnisées à 100 %.»

Comment peut-on expliquer cette déclaration ? S'agit-il d'un abus de pouvoir de sa part, ou avait-il simplement l'autorité, au nom du ministère, de faire cette déclaration ?

Pourtant, malgré ceci, Louise Potter de Vankleek Hill, qui a perdu un nombre incroyable de chèvres, a encore aujourd'hui beaucoup de mal à se remettre de cette fameuse crise. Que dois-je dire à M. François Cayer de St-Albert, qui a encouru des pertes de plus de 80 000 dollars ? Pourrais-je un jour quitter l'Assemblée législative et retourner dans ma circonscription, non pas avec de belles promesses du ministère mais bien avec la certitude que les agriculteurs seront indemnisés pour leurs nombreuses pertes encourues ? Ces gens ne vivent pas de belles promesses, mais bel et bien de billets verts.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): On Saturday evening I was pleased to attend the 16th annual Clifton Grant awards banquet, an event organized each year by the Occupational Health Clinic for Ontario Workers and the Windsor Occupational Health Information Service. It is to honour those who fight to improve safety on the job and in their communities. It is also in memory of those who lost their lives at work or as a result of it, people like Bud Jimmerfield of CAW Local 89, who died after long exposure to metal-cutting fluids. His wife and eight children attended to accept an award on his behalf.

The Clifton Grant award was presented to Shirley Egan, a health and safety rep with CAW Local 444. She works at Casino Windsor and was instrumental in the organization of the gaming workers health and safety research project. Other award winners included Nina Bradt, Connie Couture, Mike Darnell, Father John Duarte, Mike McLister, Tom Noble, Vanessa Ryan, Janice Cuckovic and Jim Winter.

The keynote speaker was Rory O'Neill, the editor of a British health and safety journal called Hazards. He pointed out the blatant double standards of corporations and governments that will advocate the use of the most sophisticated and expensive tests available to detect drug or alcohol abuse, but do not advocate the same level of testing for hazardous substances in the workplace.

In Great Britain, cancer is now the leading cause of death. We must all work towards safer workplaces in communities so Canada doesn't follow.

POLICE WEEK

Mr Gary L. Leadston (Kitchener-Wilmot): As a former police officer and chair of the Regional Municipality of Waterloo Police Services Board, I rise to remind members that May 10 through 16 is Police Week 1998. May 15 is recognized internationally as Peace Officers Memorial Day.

This year's national theme in Canada is Working Together as a Community, and Ontario has the subtheme of Partners Against Crime. I am proud of our government's efforts in partnering with and assisting police forces across Ontario.

In his budget, the Minister of Finance announced that more than \$150 million will be spent over the next five years on new community safety initiatives. Following up on the minister's commitment, the government has set up a community policing partnership program, a new five-year partnership between the province and the municipalities. This will result in the hiring of up to 1,000 new front-line police officers to increase police visibility and presence and to help target high-crime areas.

The Solicitor General, Mr James Flaherty, announced today new funding for the OPP's special squad to deal with outlaw motorcycle gangs. With this funding, the squad will expand from seven to 20 members and will work with 16 local police services and the RCMP on focused operations, including intelligence gathering and enforcement aimed at the large and growing threat from outlaw biker gangs.

I urge all members to support the special activities for Police Week.

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GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Another voice has been added to the growing chorus of outrage at the use of the so-called Ontario Jobs and Investment Board to promote the Progressive Conservative government of Mike Harris.

The Ottawa Citizen has joined those of us who have objected to Mike Harris using government funds, taxpayers' dollars, to purvey a clearly partisan message, and says so in its editorial today entitled "Give Us Back Chainsaw Mike."

The editorial reads as follows:

"He's only been in power for three years and already we feel nostalgic for the old Mike Harris.

"Mike the Knife. Chainsaw Mike. The old Mike Harris, who knew the value of a tax dollar and, as sure as God is a Tory, wasn't going to waste one red cent.

"That was then, this is now. The new, pre-electoral Mike Harris looks as if he loves spending our money, especially when it's good for a few points in the polls.

"Take the slick pamphlet pictured at left. It's full of puffery about how great tax cuts are, how much we'll love the "rural job strategy fund" (for which, read "small town

slush fund”), and how things in general are just swell with the Tories in charge.

“It went to every household in the province, almost four million of them, and cost \$750,000.

“Who paid? You did, with your Ontario tax dollars.

“Say it ain’t so, Chainsaw!”

The Ottawa Citizen is right. This advertising blitz is unfair, unethical, and a waste of tax dollars.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): Love that paper.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Ottawa-Rideau, I ask you to come to order, and the member for Lambton.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have in my hand a memo from C. McMullin, director of Ontario Works branch, and R. Cooke, director of social assistance programs branch, of the Ministry of Community and Social Services, dated May 1, 1998.

Members will know that as of April 1, 1998, the ministry instituted a living-with-parents policy for adult recipients 18 years of age and over who are living in property owned or controlled by their parents. The new policy would have meant their benefits would have been cut. Essentially what the policy said was that parents should give accommodation to their adult children and their families rent-free.

This memo of May 1 states that the policy will not apply to recipients living in accommodation separate and apart from parents, but owned and controlled by parents. This policy now is retroactive to April 1 and adjustments will be made in benefits for those who lost their benefits because of this policy when it came into effect at the beginning of last month. Apparently this new policy is in effect pending a review of the whole approach to recipients living with parents by the Minister of Community and Social Services.

I call on the minister to make that policy clear and permanent. Don’t leave recipients renting from their parents uncertain about the level of welfare benefits they will receive.

STRATFORD FESTIVAL

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): The official opening of the Stratford Shakespearean Festival will take place in June this year, but I’d like to invite the people of Ontario to take advantage of the performances that begin today.

Each year the festival offers people the opportunity to preview the plays and musicals that will be lighting up the stage during the regular season.

In the lead-up to the festival’s 46th season, audiences will be able to see Julius Caesar, Man of La Mancha, A Man for All Seasons, The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie, Much Ado about Nothing and The Miracle Worker.

The performances are offered at a reduced rate and give people a chance to see the city of Stratford in all its springtime beauty. As many of you know, during the 1997 judging for Nations in Bloom, Stratford received the distinct honour of being ranked the most beautiful city in the world with a population between 10,000 and 50,000.

My congratulations to city officials who showed the glory of Stratford. It’s truly one of the best places to work, live and raise a family, and I’m happy to see that recognized in Ontario and around the world.

The stage is set. The costumes are made. The gardens in front of the Festival Theatre are in full bloom. I encourage everyone who would be interested in participating in the festival to take advantage of this offer and come and see the beautiful city of Stratford in my riding of Perth.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move that pursuant to standing order 9(c), the House shall meet from 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm on May 11, 12 and 13, 1998, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I’d like to take this opportunity right now to introduce in the Speaker’s gallery — in our midst is a real Speaker — Mr Hugh Edighoffer, a former Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. Welcome.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I’ll make the Speaker jokes around here.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Last Wednesday, May 6, 1998, the member for St Catharines (Mr Bradley) raised a point of privilege with respect to government advertising. The member for Algoma (Mr Wildman), the member for Carleton (Mr Sterling) and the member for Scarborough-Agincourt (Mr Phillips) also contributed to the discussion in this matter.

I want to first address the issue of timeliness that was referred to by the government House leader. It is true that matters of privilege must be raised at the first available opportunity and members should always be cognizant of that fact. However, since the documents submitted to me are dated up to and including May 6, 1998, I have allowed the point to be made and considered.

I want to begin by again providing for all honourable members a definition of “privilege.” Standing order 21

states that, "Privileges are the rights enjoyed by the House collectively and by the members of the House individually conferred by the Legislative Assembly Act and other statutes, or by practice, precedent, usage and custom." Examples of privilege enjoyed by members are freedom of speech, freedom from arrest in civil actions, exemption from jury duty, exemption from attendance as a witness and freedom from molestation.

In considering the advertising in question, my responsibility is to determine whether anything in it interferes with any proceeding in this Legislature in such a manner as to intimidate or hinder or attempt by improper means to influence a member in the performance of his or her duties.

The member for St Catharines quoted from an earlier ruling I gave on a similar matter. If he had continued on with that quote, however, he would have noted that I was expressing a personal opinion and that I went on to say, "I do not have jurisdiction to examine the propriety of such campaigns unless they raise a matter of privilege or contempt." As Speaker Sauvé of the Canadian House of Commons indicated in her ruling of October 17, 1980, it is not the spending of money that is at issue, but rather whether or not such an expenditure has led to any interference with the proceedings of Parliament.

It is not clear from what the member has said what head of privilege he feels is being breached; nevertheless, I have reviewed the advertising campaign in question. The ads do not in my opinion attempt by improper means to influence members in their parliamentary conduct. They do not impede freedom of speech in this House, nor in fact do they relate to a particular proceeding currently before us. Therefore, I can find no basis on which a *prima facie* case of privilege can be made.

I further considered the advertising in question with a view to determining whether or not it amounted to contempt of this House. The ads do not in my opinion obstruct or impede the House or any member or officer in the performance of duties or functions. They have not diminished the respect due to this House, nor do they reflect negatively on it. I cannot therefore find that a *prima facie* case of contempt has been made out.

I thank all members for their submissions.

1350

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Mr Speaker, on a point of order, rising briefly: I'm not challenging your ruling. I would never challenge the ruling at all. I simply ask for some guidance as to where one can take complaints of this kind, then. I have a great concern — I don't know if I could take this to you — that this particular agency, the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board, is in fact being used for political purposes. Maybe, if we have the former principal secretary to the Premier on it, we have to go to the Integrity Commissioner or somebody like that. I don't know who you might suggest one can go to to appeal what appears, I'd say to my friend the government House leader, to be use by partisans of what I hoped would be a non-partisan agency. But Mr Lindsay, the head of that agency, has been an assistant to the government caucus, a

former principal secretary to the Premier and a Conservative candidate.

The Speaker: The point is that it's not privilege and it's not contempt. Can you refer it to the Integrity Commissioner? Of course. Any member can refer anything to the Integrity Commissioner. That's a decision you can take and you should take as soon as possible, but there's nothing I can do to resolve that problem for you. Thank you for your time; thank you for your submission.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TUITION FEES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): My question is to the Minister of Education. University and college students across this province are in a state of shock as they realize what your tuition increases are going to mean to them. They are telling us the stories of the thousands of dollars of personal debt that they already have, and they're telling us of their fears of seeing their debt get to the point where they just can't stay in school any longer.

Your budget attempted to boast of promises made and promises kept, but this is another area where you have broken your promise big-time. Your Premier promised that tuition in universities would rise slightly, to 25% of cost. Tuition in our universities is already 35% of the cost, thanks to you, and it is about to go higher. You promised that college tuition fees would be allowed to rise to 20% of cost; after your tuition increases they are 28.5%.

Now, with deregulation, you've given up any control over how much higher the fees will go. You've abandoned any responsibility to the students of this province. Why have you broken your promise and abandoned any responsibility for making sure college and university education is affordable for the average person?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): The member opposite has quoted some statistics. Let me throw back some statistics. Enrolment today at our universities and colleges has never been more robust. At the university level, at the college level, part-time students, across the board, the enrolment today at our universities and colleges has never been more robust.

Second, the amount of assistance going from the government to the students has never been higher than it is today, to assist the students in their post-secondary education.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Fort William.

Hon David Johnson: She doesn't want to hear this, I guess, Mr Speaker.

This government, the Progressive Conservative government, has assisted students, and will this year, to the tune of about \$550 million. The highest amount of assistance the Liberal government afforded to post-secondary students was about \$200 million a year. We

have more than doubled that amount of assistance to the students. In addition, there are loans on top of that to assist students even further.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): The minister didn't answer the question. You haven't even started to address your government's 60% increase in tuition that's going to happen by next year at this time. We started a Shattered Dreams campaign, Minister, that has received cards back from all over the province.

I'd like to ask the minister, what do you say to a student from Toronto who has a \$40,000 debt after three years, with no relief from your government? What do you say to the student from Sarnia with a \$25,000 debt after two years, with no relief from your government? The only relief you have given them is tuition increases — tuition increases, by the way, which only exceeded the increases brought about by the previous government. What do you say to students across this province with high debt loads, having failed miserably to answer any of their concerns, with an average debt load of \$25,000 coming out of university in this province?

The Speaker: Question, please.

Mr Duncan: What do you say to them in terms of accessibility and affordability of education in this province? You've undermined it, you've done nothing for it. Your last answer was an embarrassment to your government, just as your policies —

The Speaker: Thank you. Answer, please.

Hon David Johnson: What I would say to the students is, too bad the Liberals don't have their facts straight. The facts are that the average debt is nowhere near \$25,000 per student. The facts are that this government is giving more assistance to students than any government in the history of provincial government.

The budget announced the creation of the Canada-Ontario millennium scholarship fund, which will combine with the federal government to provide \$9 billion worth of assistance.

We have created the opportunity trust fund, some \$600 million worth of assistance to help our post-secondary students. There are more students than ever in the history of the province of Ontario.

The member is speculating on what the tuition increases will be. He doesn't know what the tuition increases will be. Under the Liberal government, we do know, though, that tuition fees went up by 35%. We know that as a matter of fact. Now, where is the outrage about that?

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon David Johnson: Our system is to be accessible, is to have more opportunity and to allow our students to take the courses they need.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Ottawa-Rideau, I'd ask you to stop doing that. You're frightening your own members.

Final supplementary.

Mr Duncan: The fact is, according to the universities we contacted today, the tuition increases will approach

60% by the end of next year. Your government has no plan other than to deregulate tuition and make it more difficult for average Ontarians to access university in this province, whether it be at the undergraduate level or the graduate level.

What do you say to those students there and the high school students that are in these galleries about the affordability of education? Your facts and figures don't address the debt level. The fact is the average debt is \$25,000 a year. The fact is you will have increased tuition by close to 60%. The fact is you've deregulated tuition for certain programs. The fact, Minister, is that your government is a failure in post-secondary education.

What do you say to those students? Give us some facts about what you're going to do to give meaningful relief to students, starting with withdrawing your policies and facing up to your obligation as a government to ensure that education at the post-secondary level is accessible.

What are you going to do? Give us some real facts, not your spin, not your propaganda. Get into the 1990s and out of the 1980s and face today's reality. Why don't you do that, Minister?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, order. Member for Dufferin-Peel, come to order. Minister.

Hon David Johnson: I don't think I can match that. I don't think I can go without breathing for quite that long.

What I will say again to the member opposite is, please check the facts. The average debt is not \$25,000 per student. We should get our facts straight. As a matter of fact, the average debt per post-secondary student is about half that, universities being higher, colleges being a bit lower, and other students being a bit lower than that.

Again, this government this year is giving over \$500 million in direct assistance to students. Your government, the Liberal government, during its term gave less than \$200 million in terms of assistance to students. The participation rate at our universities and colleges is higher under a Progressive Conservative government than it was under a Liberal government. We have more students; we have more assistance going to students.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Windsor-Walkerville, come to order.

Answer, please.

Hon David Johnson: Finally, what we want to achieve is more opportunity. We want to open up more opportunity. That's why we're pouring more money into this system. That's why we're getting private —

The Speaker: Thank you. New question, official opposition.

ONTARIO HYDRO

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): My question is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, a few weeks ago Ontario Hydro announced that it would be taking a staggering \$6.6-billion write-down against its 1997

balance sheet. That write-down, at \$6.6 billion, represents the largest write-down in the corporate history of Canada.

My question to you, Minister: Were you consulted by Ontario Hydro about the size and the makeup of that write-down, and if so, did you express an opinion and/or give your approval?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): Ontario Hydro has its own board of directors. They've looked at some problems that have built up in Ontario Hydro, as you well know, over a number of years. They felt it was better to do a write-down now and acknowledge those responsibilities and obligations of Ontario Hydro now, up front.

1400

Mr Conway: Ontario Hydro in this particular matter is using extraordinarily questionable accounting practices. Time does not permit, but let me tell you what you, Minister, already know. In this \$6.6 billion of write-down, Ontario Hydro is writing off, against last year's balance sheet, hundreds of millions — in fact billions — of dollars of yet to be incurred expenses. I can imagine what Erik Peters, the Provincial Auditor, thinks about that. They are writing down, against last year's balance sheet, hundreds of millions, billions of dollars of yet to be incurred expenses. Do you, Ernie Eves, as the guarantor of this publicly sponsored debt, approve of that kind of accounting practice?

Hon Mr Eves: Under the accrual basis of accounting, which the government has now gone to, obligations are recognized as decisions are made by that particular body. It is true what the member says, that ultimately, at the end of the day, the Ontario government has always been the ultimate guarantor of any indebtedness or obligations of Ontario Hydro. That's been an ongoing fact of life around here long before both he and I were elected to this place, and will continue to be so and I think has to be so. However, I think Ontario Hydro, its board of directors, has decided in its wisdom that these are obligations Ontario Hydro has to recognize and that the sooner they recognize them, the better.

Mr Conway: As we speak, Ontario Hydro is now by its own admission bankrupt. With this write-down they had a multibillion-dollar deficit last year. They've got \$32 billion worth of debt, almost all of which you guarantee on behalf of this assembly and the people of Ontario. We are about to head into a competitive electricity marketplace, which in principle we all support.

It couldn't be clearer what Ontario Hydro's board of directors and Ontario Hydro management is doing with this kind of multibillion-dollar write-down. What they intend to do is offload much of their multibillion-dollar debt, off the back of the public utility, and on to the back of the Ontario taxpayer, who very soon is going to awaken to this magical new world of stranded debt that's probably going to be in the neighbourhood of \$15 billion to \$20 billion.

My question to you, Minister of Finance, as the guarantor of all Ontario Hydro debt, is, what specific measures are you taking, particularly in this transitional

period, to protect the Ontario taxpayer against the rapacious and incredible behaviour of Ontario Hydro board management?

Hon Mr Eves: Ontario Hydro's debt has amassed over many, many years, as he well knows. The debt of Ontario Hydro has continued to grow over many decades of existence. I would quite readily say that perhaps there are some issues with Ontario Hydro that should have been faced long before now, but Ontario Hydro is now facing them. With respect to the issue of stranded debt, the government will certainly be looking at whatever Ontario Hydro plans to do with respect to stranded debt. We have approved no new increase in Ontario Hydro debt to date.

TUITION FEES

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is also for the Minister of Finance. I want to go back to your budget and the huge tax grab you are imposing upon the university students of Ontario. Already in three years you have increased tuition fees by 60%, and in this most recent budget you are increasing tuition fees for a large number of students across this province by a further \$5,000 a year — an incredible tax grab. What it means is that the sons and daughters of middle-income and modest-income families are going to have a harder and harder time financing their way through university, especially graduate programs and some of the programs that will lead to the assurance of a job.

Today we've got with us a number of students from the University of Toronto medical school, who all say that your tuition tax grab would have made it impossible for them to go through medical school.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question.

Mr Hampton: Minister, how do you justify giving the wealthiest a tax gift and imposing a huge tax grab on these —

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I refer the question to the Minister of Education.

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): The first point to make is that the member is speculating on what any increase may or may not be. To stand here in the House and say that a particular tuition fee is going to go up by \$5,000, or they're going to go up by \$5,000 across the board, I'm sure the member knows — I hope the member knows — is total speculation on his part.

What we are trying to accomplish in this whole program, a program which includes \$150 million in funding from the province of Ontario, more money from the province of Ontario, which includes a \$9 billion Canada-Ontario millennium fund to assist our students, is to increase the opportunities, to ensure the access is there for our young people. The numbers have been increasing. There are more under the Progressive Conservative government than there were under the NDP government, to

ensure that accessibility is there and to ensure there are greater opportunities for our young people.

Mr Hampton: We hear the same old spin lines, but these are real students. These are people who know what you are doing to the possibility they have had in the past of becoming physicians, in some cases becoming engineers, becoming computer programmers, getting into graduate school. They know, because they are the people who are going to have to pick up the bill, the debt.

What do you say, for example, to James Stewart, who is married with three children and will face a debt load of more than \$100,000 with these new tuition fees? All he wants to do is go back to northern Ontario to practise as a physician. What do you say to him? What do you say to Sandra Demarais, who can't count on family support, who can't count on her family to help her with her financial burden in terms of university tuition fees? Minister, you can spin the numbers all you want. These are the real people.

The Speaker: Question, please.

Mr Hampton: These are the people who are having to handle debt loads of \$50,000, \$60,000, \$70,000 because of their tuition fees. You've given the wealthiest people a huge tax gift. What do you say to these people who —

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon David Johnson: First of all, I would note that again, with the position of the leader of the third party, it's interesting that when he was in government, tuition fees rose by 50% during the period of the NDP government. Where was the Leader of the Opposition at that time? Where were these very points while he was sitting watching tuition fees increase by 50%?

What I will say is that universities and colleges — Western has indicated that they will improve the quality of our education system and ensure accessibility for our students. Sheridan College has indicated that they will improve quality and access to our young people, so that more and more of our young people will have the opportunities of a post-secondary education at a higher quality level.

The Speaker: Final supplementary, member for Windsor-Riverside.

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): There may have been tuition increases in the past, but this minister is totally deregulating them. Now the sky is going to be the limit.

These medical students aren't concerned only about themselves. They are concerned that you're closing the door on middle-income and lower-income students from being able to pursue the opportunities that they have. Many in this place will agree that an advanced degree will lead to a ticket to a job, but what we don't agree with is that you're reserving all of these tickets to students, families, those who already have money. You say we're speculating about tuition increases. Well, this afternoon the business board at the University of Toronto is going to be considering your astronomical tuition levels.

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Minister, it's not too late for your government to come to its senses and reverse this policy. What do you have to say to these students and the next generation of students when they find out they just won't be able to afford the education they need?

Hon David Johnson: The government has a basic difference of opinion with the third party on this matter. The third party would raise tuition fees by 50% and not get a darn thing for it. They would allow the extra revenues to come in, and that's exactly what they did during their term. This government is striving for higher quality in the education system. This government is striving for more opportunity for our young people.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): So if you're richer, that's higher quality.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Hold on. Members for Fort York, Sudbury East, Lake Nipigon, come to order, please.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Sounds like a Liberal.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon David Johnson: I hope I don't sound like a Liberal. That was a very unkind cut.

Many of our young people are being turned away from the kind of program they want, in the higher-tech field, for example, in all fields, really.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Members for Windsor-Walkerville and Renfrew North, come to order.

Hon David Johnson: Just to wrap up, what's important to this government is continued access for our young people to post-secondary institutions — we believe that will happen — but also a higher-quality education and greater opportunity for the young people who are currently being denied today. We are putting in \$150 million in particular courses to ensure that there are more spaces, more opportunities, for our young people.

NURSING STAFF

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health, but I would say to the Minister of Education, you just don't get it, do you, that middle- and modest-income families can't afford to pay \$10,000 a year.

To the Minister of Health, this week a number of nursing organizations, seven to be exact, came together to point out that there is an immediate crisis in patient care in Ontario. They're very clear why there's a crisis in patient care. It's because there are 10,000 fewer nurses in our hospitals, our homes for the aged and our nursing homes, 10,000 fewer because of the money you've taken out of the health care system.

They give all kinds of examples: One chronic care facility where there are two 50-bed units that are staffed with one RN each. If one of the RNs has to go away, it's one RN for 100.

Minister, what are you going to do about that patient care crisis, about the fact that there aren't enough nurses in our hospitals?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): We certainly are aware that this is Nursing Week. In fact, this week I have the opportunity to participate in several events, indicating how much our government values the work that is done by nurses and also their role in patient care.

I think we need to put one fallacy to rest, and that is the fact that there have been 10,000 nursing jobs lost in this province. For the record, let's get it clear that this is the number of memberships that ONA has lost. The actual number is not that and nursing unemployment remains at 4.3%. It is the same rate we have had in this province for about five to six years now. We have been working with the nursing associations, the nursing groups, and we appreciate and we understand their concerns. As you know, we have set up a Nursing Services Task Force so that we can work collaboratively with them to resolve the issues that are of concern to them so that we can continue to provide the highest level —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Mr Hampton: This was not ONA that was speaking; this is the Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario, the College of Nurses of Ontario, the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, the Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario. They all make the case that if you go from one end of the province to the other, through the hospitals, the nursing homes, the homes for the aged, there are 10,000 fewer people providing nursing services. That's the reality.

They point out that in your most recent budget you put in \$230 million to fix computers, and you try to pass that off as an investment in nursing care, but they are very clear: That is for computers, not for improvements in nursing care.

They also point out that in so far as you do have a plan for nursing care, it is to have part-time nurses, temporary nurses, on-call nurses — in other words, no continuity of care for the patient; simply something to help you out of a fix.

Minister, what are you going to do about the fact that there are 10,000 fewer nurses in our hospitals, and nurses are not even going to enter the field in Ontario any more because they see that you don't care about —

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

Hon Mrs Witmer: Again I would just emphasize to you that there have not been 10,000 nursing jobs lost in this province. This is a drop in the ONA membership. However, I would just like to remind the NDP that although we continue to put in new money for nursing services so we can ensure that we have the highest-quality nursing staff possible in this province, I would remind you that it was the NDP that, through their social contract, removed \$590 million from hospitals, doctors, home care and health councils. We are actually adding new money to ensure that we can have the highest-quality patient care.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): The nurses of the province will be very interested in what the minister has said. She seems to be claiming that there have not been a lot of nursing jobs lost, yet every report that comes from every hospital that is staggering under the \$650-million cut to hospitals talks about lost jobs.

You talk about a task force in nursing care. The last time we had a task force on the emergency problem, what did you come up with? A promise to create temporary beds. What do temporary beds mean? Temporary jobs for nurses, casual on-call nurses, and that leads to an erosion of professionalism. That's what the nurses are trying to tell you, that your way of managing is leading to a situation where nurses do not have stable, long-term jobs; where patients do not have the continuity of care; where departments are staffed variably by people who may not be specialists.

Minister, you've taken a whole lot of expert nurses out of this system. What are you going to do about it today to improve patient care?

1420

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would just like to indicate that we have heard the concerns of the nursing profession and our government actually is putting in place the building blocks to address the long-standing issues, issues that were there under your government and under the Liberal government. We are putting in place long-term solutions. As nurses have left hospitals, nurses have found other positions in community-based services, they have found new positions in the long-term-care facilities. The role of the nurse continues to change.

In our budget last week we indicated that we were going to be spending \$5 million in order that we could utilize the services of the new group of health professionals, the nurse practitioners. We also indicated, when we made our long-term-care announcement, that there would be employment there for 7,900 additional nurses. We also indicated, when we made our changes to address the emergency room overcrowding situation, that we were going to set aside \$1 million —

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon Mrs Witmer: — to address the issue of emergency care and critical care nurses. As I say, we are taking action now to address the long-standing issues —

The Speaker: Thank you. New question, official opposition.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I have a question directed to the Minister of Health. Minister, I'd like you to respond more specifically to the situation of nurses in this province. They were here at the Legislature today to tell you that your government doesn't respect nurses, that your government doesn't place a high value on them. The college says at least 7,000 positions have disappeared; you'd prefer to debate that.

Minister, what I'd like to debate you on is what you're doing, for example, to one of the nurses who called from Sick Kids' Hospital the Ontario Liberals' Patients Matter Health Hotline. We were told by that nurse that you've turned her nursing conditions upside down, that you've

made that hospital, which is supposed to be a beacon of hope for parents across the province, into a place which in the last three weeks has had to defer 20 level 3 neonatal cases away from the hospital.

Minister, you've cut \$22 million from Sick Kids' Hospital. Will you put some money back and will you dedicate that money to hire new nurses?

Hon Mrs Witmer: We certainly respect the work that is done by nurses, whether they are at Sick Kids' Hospital or any other nurses. In fact, one of our recent announcements recognized the need for additional oncology nurses, and at the time that we made the investment into additional oncology programs for children at Sick Kids, we also indicated that there was money there in order that we could train and hire additional oncology nurses.

Mr Kennedy: Minister, I would caution you not to keep ignoring the needs of nurses and patients. You and your Premier are one of the central causes for the discouragement of nurses in this province. While you cut, yes, the number of neonatal beds, you've also made it difficult — they can't staff those beds all the time. Why? Because you've ruined the working conditions for nurses across this province. In Sick Kids you've made it necessary for them to work part-time, temporary work.

What are you going to say, Minister, really going to say, to the parents of kids who are going to be in hospital for up to 26 weeks, young, newborn babies, and they have to go visit them out of town? They have to go London, they have to go to other places because of the cuts your government has made.

You shouldn't talk about investments when we're talking about people here. You took the money out from under these nurses. You caused them to be fired. You caused their working conditions to be worsened.

Specifically, to the parents of the kids who depend on those neonatal services, will you put money back in and will you dedicate the money going back to hospitals for nurses?

Hon Mrs Witmer: First, I think we need to make it abundantly clear, our government highly respects the work that is done and values the work that has been done by nurses in this province.

I think an indication of the respect and concern we have for the nursing profession and also for the patients they deal with each day is that since becoming Minister of Health I have met with the nursing association on 11 occasions in order that I could start to address the long-standing problems that had been created by previous governments, so that we could start putting the building blocks in place to seeking long-term solutions. That is why we committed to a patient bill of rights, that is why we have committed to a task force for nurses so we can address those situations, and that is why we are re-investing.

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon Mrs Witmer: In fact, I would indicate to you some of the mail that has been coming our way. This is a letter from the Canadian Nurses Association, Mary Ellen Jeans, executive director:

"I would like to congratulate your government for making a commitment towards reinvesting" —

The Speaker: Thank you.

PROVISION OF INFORMATION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. From 1991 to 1995, Ontarians were able to know who the biggest corporate polluters in the province were. The NDP government of the day yearly initiated and published its annual Offences Against the Environment report, but your government immediately stopped publishing this report. Perhaps it's because you're trying to protect your corporate friends, or perhaps you're protecting your own government. We all know about the MNR breaking Ontario's environmental laws and being caught. But thanks to the work of the Sierra Legal Defence Fund, some of whom are in the gallery today — the ones your ministry tried to charge \$20,000 to get information which should be free to the public — you have at least been ordered to release this information.

Minister, you can run but you can't hide. We know that the 1996 waste water discharge report has been ready since last October. Stop trying to operate in secrecy behind closed doors. Will you release that report today?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): No, I can't release it today because it's not ready to be released today, but it will be released within weeks.

Ms Churley: Minister, do you have to do a little work on it before you put it out to the public? It has been ready since October and you've been foot-dragging for months before that. Maybe the reason you no longer publish the Offences Against the Environment report is because you are simply not enforcing as many environmental laws because of the layoffs. We know that fines and prosecutions have gone way down, and we know why.

This is another example of how your phoney tax scheme affects our health and our community. Stop hiding and stop protecting your corporate friends. The public has the right to know how or if environmental laws are being upheld in this province. Minister, will you please tell this House today when you will table prosecution data concerning our environmental laws? Tell us today when you are going to let the public know what they have the right to know.

Hon Mr Sterling: As the member opposite knows, this information is available through the freedom of information laws and will be provided to anyone who asks specific information about these prosecutions. They can obtain that information. It has always been available; it will be available in the future.

There has been a change in focus, however, by our government. Our government is more interested in stopping the pollution than they are in prosecuting and penalizing people.

Ms Churley: It's because you don't have enough people out there, Norm. That is ridiculous.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Riverdale, come to order.

Hon Mr Sterling: We are continuing to prosecute some people and some companies as strenuously as had been done before. However —

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. You asked the question; he's answering it, that's all.

Ms Churley: I didn't like the answer.

The Speaker: I noticed.

Hon Mr Sterling: My directors, my field officers, have gone out into the field. What they have been able to do is transform the environmental field into preventing problems —

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon Mr Sterling: — rather than allowing them to continue to occur and prosecutions therefore being necessary. We will continue to prosecute the bad actors —

The Speaker: Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Hamilton East, that's out of order. I want you to withdraw that comment.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): What did I say?

The Speaker: If you don't withdraw it, I'll have to name you. Just withdraw the comment.

Mr Agostino: I'll withdraw whatever you asked me to withdraw.

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HOME CARE

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): My question is for the minister responsible for seniors' issues. Last year in this House I raised concerns about our local community care access centre. This is the largest community care access centre in the province, located a seven-iron shot away from the Prime Minister's residence, a Prime Minister who has cut transfer payments to this government by \$2 billion, thereby making it more difficult to provide for seniors, disabled individuals and people recovering from surgery.

Our government is spending an additional \$170 million on community-based long-term care — all Ontario dollars, no help from Mr Rock. But there are concerns that this is still not enough.

In January, Minister, you announced a series of fact-finding reviews across Ontario to study the situation. Could the minister report back to the House on the results of these reviews?

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]): I'd like to thank the member and all the members from the Ottawa-Carleton area who brought to my attention the concerns about access to community supports for seniors and the disabled.

It's true that Ottawa's is the largest CCAC. We're spending about \$70 million, entirely with Ontario taxpayer dollars, no additional support from the federal government in what we spend for seniors in Ottawa-

Carleton. But we undertook this intensive review of the need and the demand in that area, and after the review we awarded an additional \$3 million to eliminate all waiting lists for nursing services in Ottawa-Carleton.

This additional injection of money has allowed the board to begin the new year without a deficit, and in fact we are cash-flowing to the Ottawa CCAC in acknowledgement of this expanded growth.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mr Jackson: This will result in hiring additional nurses and therapists.

I also want to indicate that a total of \$35 million was distributed —

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Guzzo: Seniors in Ottawa and indeed across the province see that this government has acknowledged the growth in demand for home care and responded to it with a coordinated plan.

Given that this is one-time funding, could the minister explain how the government will continue to answer the rising demand for these services?

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): That's only enough to pay for one day.

Hon Mr Jackson: The interjection from the Liberal health critic says this will only pay for one day. I want to assure him that the amount of money we got from the federal government for home care in the last budget wouldn't buy five minutes of home care for the seniors in this province, not five minutes.

The truth is that in the city of Toronto alone, \$13.7 million was provided in additional — this money was not budgeted for. The Premier and my colleague the health minister found the additional \$13 million to ensure that there isn't a single waiting list for nursing services in the city of Toronto.

The government has provided additional funding through \$93 million that was announced on April 20, and that money will assist with community-based supports by relieving pressures in emergency departments by providing home care, to relieve pressure on weekends and after-hour hospital discharges — \$1.2 billion in additional money.

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon Mr Jackson: In the Ottawa-Carleton area alone, \$36.8 million more will go for its seniors and disabled.

Our plan is working because —

The Speaker: Thank you.

WATER AND SEWER SERVICES

Mr Peter North (Elgin): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. You would know that in the budget previous to this one, there was a water and sewer fund. Municipalities across Elgin county have inquired in one way or another with regard to that water and sewer fund. Some have made applications; they've met the deadlines and made applications. Also, there's an issue with regard to a landfill in my particular riding, Green Lane landfill.

I wonder if you could bring me and the municipalities of Elgin up to date with regard to those two issues.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): The \$200-million fund to help municipalities that have trouble meeting environmental standards for drinking water and for sewage treatment — we've been considering those applications. We did grant six applications worth about \$18 million in total, but there is an expectation that I will be announcing within two or three weeks quite a large number of projects which would include, I would hope, some of the municipalities in your own riding.

With regard to the Green Lane landfill site, my ministry is reviewing that particular file and I will consider the recommendations they make to me once they have made the recommendations with regard to that particular file.

Mr North: Concerning the projects I referred to with regard to water and sewers, is there going to be a first-round, second-round, third-round process with regard to the doling out of dollars or will we see that in a process where it will be a blanket announcement across the province? If particular municipalities in Elgin are not successful, will there be any other opportunities to access funds for projects in Elgin in particular? These projects are very much needed.

Hon Mr Sterling: The way we have proceeded is that we have announced the first six, and we will announce another much larger number which will come up in the not-too-far-distant future. The municipalities will have an opportunity to either indicate that they are going to go ahead with the projects or that they are not going to go ahead with the projects. I expect a third announcement somewhere down the line once the second group of municipalities has had the opportunity to see what the offer on the table is. The funding is not for 100% of the projects, therefore there may be some municipalities that feel they do not have enough money to go ahead with their particular project and may deny the assistance, so to speak. There will probably be a smaller third segment, but the major funding, or the major initiative, will be taken within a matter of weeks.

BUDGET

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Minister of Finance. The budget is the key document that Ontario uses to evaluate how we stand financially. It's important that it be a fair and clear document. In my opinion, the budget you presented no longer is fair and clear. I'll be specific. I think it's virtually impossible for Ontario now to understand the state of our finances. In the last 90 days you've moved about \$1.7 billion of expenses that were planned for this fiscal year, the one we're in now, and the next two years back to last year and you wrote them off, including, I might add, about \$1 billion of education expenses that we've been anticipating in the next three years. So rather than a deficit of \$5.2 billion that you reported, I think an

argument can be made that the real number was perhaps closer to \$3.5 billion.

My question is this: Is the Provincial Auditor in agreement with the way you have reported the 1997-98 deficit?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): The Provincial Auditor is quite in agreement with the PSAAB basis of accounting, which requires us, as the honourable member knows, to account for those services now in the year the decision is made for those expenditures. He raises a perfectly valid example with respect to the teachers' pension plan.

In our previous year, last year's budget a year ago, May 6, 1997, we allocated some \$250 million, which was an offer we were making to the Ontario Teachers' Federation with respect to factor 85 early retirement. That decision was made for the fiscal year 1997-98. We recently came to an agreement with the teachers and the Ontario Teachers' Federation, as he well knows, which is going to cost Ontario an additional \$725 million, bringing the total to \$975 million, accurately and appropriately accounted for in the year in which the decision was made.

Mr Phillips: I never mentioned the word "pension." The question was very clear. Ontario needs assurance that we are getting an accurate reflection of the state of our finances. In the last 90 days you moved \$1.7 billion worth of expenses that you had planned to make in the years ahead back to last year. I say again, if this were a publicly traded company, I'm not sure the securities commission would pass these books.

The question is very clear: not whether the Provincial Auditor wants what you call PSAAB accounting, but did you pre-clear with the Provincial Auditor the way you have treated this \$1.7 billion worth of expenses?

Hon Mr Eves: The Deputy Minister of Finance in the Ministry of Finance is in constant conversation with the Provincial Auditor when it comes to decisions such as ones that are made with respect to the PSAAB basis of accounting. The member may find it very difficult to believe, having been a member of a cabinet whose Treasurer claimed one year they had a surplus, and then when the NDP government got into power and an independent, accurate accounting of the books — talking about moving money around, he sat in a cabinet that literally moved around hundreds of millions of dollars and put it in the wrong year to make themselves look good so they could pat themselves on the back. It didn't do you much good. You didn't get re-elected in 1990.

We don't have two sets of books in the province any more; there's one set of books, so everybody knows exactly where they stand and you can't do the type of fiscal manoeuvring that you people did in 1990.

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CARIBANA

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. Each year over one million tourists flock to Toronto from all over Canada, the United States, Europe and the

Caribbean for a 10-day Caribana festival. This community event pumps over \$250 million in tourism revenue into the Toronto economy and the province collects, we believe, some \$30 million in taxes out of this event alone.

The entire festival, as I know you know, is in jeopardy. Caribana needs \$600,000 to build costumes and to organize the festival. The city of Toronto has agreed to contribute \$350,000 to the festival this year, but this funding hinges on the province's contributing your share of the funding.

We understand that there are problems with the organizing efforts, and we don't want to in any way belittle those, but we also believe it's crucial that Caribana take place this year. We want to know, will you show your support of this festival by committing funds to ensure that Caribana does in fact take place this year?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): I certainly want to say right off the bat that this government supports Caribana. It is a major part of our tourism season, and certainly we're going to do everything we can to work with the city of Toronto and also the advisory committee of Caribana and the CCC organization to ensure that Caribana will be a success. So we are fully committed and behind it. I just want the honourable member to know that.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I hear the minister saying quite clearly that this is an important tourism event, that it is an important cultural event per se and that it brings in a great deal of money, obviously, for the province and for the city. I heard you say that. I also heard you say that you're going to work with the advisory committee and the Caribbean Cultural Committee.

What we didn't hear you say is this: Are you committing yourself this year to making sure the money will flow so that the event continues; and are you committing yourself as well for the long term, in terms of working with the CCC and the city, to make sure the money will flow so that we can avoid the perennial problems they face? Are you committing yourself to that?

Hon Mr Palladini: I want to make it very clear that the honourable member understands how important Caribana is to the city of Toronto —

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): We know that, Al.

Hon Mr Palladini: Yes, I know that. What I also want to say to the honourable member is that you're right, there hasn't been multi-year funding in place, something that should have been in place while you were in government as well. This government is going to take a look at how we can make it happen and make sure that Caribana is going to be a very viable asset to the city of Toronto.

CHILD PROTECTION

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. I read in Thursday's *Globe and Mail* that the one-year anniversary of an inquest into the tragic death of a child here in Toronto is fast approaching. I ask the minister what steps

she has undertaken to improve the provincial child protection system in light of the recommendations of that inquest.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): I would like to congratulate the honourable member for his private member's resolution asking for more resources to go into the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program which, as he knows, is something we're doing in the budget this year to increase that program, which might actually help us prevent families from ending up at the door of a children's aid society.

We have used the last year since those inquests and since the recommendations from the task force to do a number of things. There are 220 more front-line staff out there helping children's aid societies to protect children. We are putting those staff and existing staff through additional training. There's the new risk assessment system that helps them make better decisions about which children are at risk. We have started the work on the new computer technology, which will ensure that children don't fall through the cracks between the agencies.

We have also had a review of the legislation by an expert panel, which will be coming out shortly, and after an initial consultation period on that, we would like to move forward with new legislation that looks at some of the issues that were raised in the task force and the inquest; for example, definitions of "neglect."

Mr Arnott: Last week's provincial budget also announced a government commitment to put an additional \$170 million into our children's aid societies. My supplementary question is this: How is the government going to use these funds, and what are the next steps in the government's plan to improve our child protection system?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The money that has been allocated in the budget, I would like to remind the members opposite, in case they missed the significance, is base funding for children's aid societies. One of the challenges, of course, is that the old funding formula, which has existed for many years and under previous governments, has this sort of emergency funding at the end of the year, which makes it very difficult for a child welfare agency to keep good, trained staff. With this new money in base funding, we're going to be able to fix the way they get funded so it will better support front-line staff and train staff.

But we also know we need to continue with more front-line workers with additional training, and another important piece of our child care reforms is to improve the foster parent system. Our child welfare agencies depend on those foster parents. They're wonderful people. They give an incredible amount of their own time and their own resources to help these troubled children, and we want to make sure we can have more of such committed foster parents and that they are financially compensated for the efforts they make.

AGRICULTURAL FUNDING

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. The

farmers of Ontario are extremely disappointed with the Harris government for not living up to their election promise. Thirty-seven farm organizations urged the government to restore agriculture and reinvest in core programs such as research, marketing, environmental issues, food inspection and safety nets. In regard to last week's budget, they said you failed to deliver. They said you heard their message but you ignored it.

Why did you not listen to the farmers? Why did you ignore the agricultural industry of Ontario?

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I tell my colleague across the way that the Premier met with the farmers of Ontario at the plowing match and certainly I've had the opportunity of meeting with them on a number of occasions.

Research and technology transfers are up. As a matter of fact, the entire budget for the agrifood industry is up. We are looking towards keeping our rural young people where they were born and raised, in that rural surrounding.

I'm quite pleased to be able to tell my colleagues in the House that agriculture is in good hands. The budget is up —

Mr David Caplan (Oriole): That's not what the farmers are saying.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: I see the member for Oriole has many farms in his riding. The member for Oriole is quite an expert at farming, I'm sure.

Mr Hoy: Minister, what your finance minister is doing is cooking the books. All you and your finance minister are doing is cooking the books. You have included \$59 million in estimated crop insurance —

Interjections.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): "Cooking" is a legitimate word, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): There's nothing out of order about "cooking."

Mr Hoy: Minister, you have included \$59 million in estimated crop insurance claims and \$20 million in one-time, ad hoc assistance for ice storm damage. You are using disasters as an excuse to pull cheap political tricks with the budget. When the crop insurance claims and the ice storm relief money are subtracted, your budget is only \$261 million. That is a net loss to the agricultural industry, an industry that means so much to this province. After all, you promised that not one nickel would be cut from agriculture. Minister, you must agree with the 37 farm organizations that responded to your budget by saying, "A promise made, a promise broken." Minister, you broke your promise.

1450

Hon Mr Villeneuve: I find it somewhat ironic that someone from the Liberal Party accuses this government of cooking books. I believe they may have written the book on cooking the books.

The farmers of Ontario asked the government to continue the provincial sales tax rebate. That was announced on the first day of April: another promise kept. We were

asked by the farmers of Ontario to correct the farm tax rebate. We had to go back every year. It has now been corrected: \$170 million farmers do not have to pay and then get the rebate.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Essex-Kent, you've got to allow the minister to answer your question.

Interjection.

The Speaker: It's not provocation to answer the question. Minister.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Interestingly, when there is good news the opposition has great difficulty in listening.

The farm tax rebate was corrected: \$35 million that's going into rural Ontario to promote and keep our rural young people in place.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I want to hear the answer. Minister.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Another \$30 million last year to create employment in rural communities.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Brampton North, I could throw you out because you're not in your seat.

New question, leader of the third party.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Mr Speaker, I'm not done.

The Speaker: Minister of Agriculture, you know, I was going to let you sum up and then the government side starts heckling and it gets to the point that there's no argument.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I don't want to debate it. You were done, in my opinion.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health and it concerns a very serious situation that has developed across northwestern Ontario. Your government has downloaded the cost of providing public health on to municipalities. I don't need to tell you how important public health is in terms of disease prevention, in terms of dealing with a number of food safety and water safety issues. Your government has downloaded those costs on to municipalities.

Many of the municipalities in northwestern Ontario have said they simply cannot handle the cost that you've downloaded. Not only that, but they simply don't have the knowledge, the infrastructure, in place to take over public health. As a result, the northwestern health unit, the public health unit for all the communities west of Thunder Bay, is having a very difficult time. In fact, we understand they're having to borrow money on a bank loan to finance their day-to-day operations.

Minister, can you tell us what your government is doing to ensure that there is good public health across northwestern Ontario?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): Obviously public health is extremely important and the

programs that are being provided by the public health providers across the province have a tremendous impact.

We have been working with the public health units and we continue to work with AMO and all of the municipalities to ensure that each municipality and each public health provider is able to provide the necessary programs, and we will continue to work with people in northwestern Ontario to ensure that the appropriate standards can be met and the appropriate programs provided.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm seeking unanimous consent to permit the wearing in the House of ribbons recognizing the hepatitis C victims.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Hold on, I want to be clear. Member for York South, take your seat, please.

The member for York South is requesting unanimous consent to wear the ribbon that is on his lapel. Agreed? Agreed.

PETITIONS

NURSES' BILL OF RIGHTS

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it states:

"Whereas nursing is key to quality health care; and

"Whereas nurses want the right to provide high-quality care; and

"Whereas nurses want the right to be heard and consulted on health care issues; and

"Whereas nurses want the right to be recognized and treated as equals in the health care system; and

"Whereas nurses want the right to have meaningful participation in all aspects of health care reform; and

"Whereas nurses want the right to be advocates for their communities and the people they care for without fear of reprisal; and

"Whereas nurses want the right to work in settings that are free from harassment and discrimination and that nurture learning, diversity, personal growth, job satisfaction and mutual support; and

"Whereas nurses want the right work in conditions that promote and foster professionalism and teamwork; and

"Whereas nurses want the right to deliver care in an integrated, publicly funded, not-for-profit health care system that is grounded in the principles of the Canada Health Act;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to honour, promote and respect the nurses' bill of rights as outlined above and to ensure that these rights are enshrined in all aspects of health care."

I affix my signature to this petition.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have petitions forwarded to me by Bill Fuller on behalf of SWOAR, Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas each year in Ontario approximately 300 workers are killed on the job, several thousand die of occupational diseases and 400,000 suffer work-related injuries and illnesses; and

"Whereas during the past decade the Workers' Health and Safety Centre proved to be the most cost-effective, WCB-funded prevention organization dedicated to worker health and safety concerns; and

"Whereas the WCB provides over 80% of its legislated prevention funding to several employer-controlled safety associations and less than 20% to the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre recently lost several million dollars in funding and course revenue due to government changes to legislated training requirements; and

"Whereas 30% of Workers' Health and Safety Centre staff were laid off due to these lost training funds; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre now faces an additional 25% cut to its 1998 budget, which will be used to augment new funding for employer safety associations in the health, education and service sector; and

"Whereas the WCB's 1998 planned baseline budget cuts for safety associations and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre will be disproportionately against the workers' centre and reduce its 1998 budget allocation to less than 15% of the WCB prevention funding,

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the WCB's proposed cuts and direct the WCB to increase the Workers' Health and Safety Centre's funding to at least 50% of the WCB's legislated prevention funding; and

"Further, we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the WCB to significantly increase its legislated prevention funding in order to eliminate workplace illness, injury and death."

I add my name to theirs.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I continue to receive these petitions. As a matter of fact, these are from Sudbury and Thunder Bay. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Liberal government of Canada has passed Bill C-68, An Act respecting firearms and other weapons; and

"Whereas we welcome real gun control and support those portions of Bill C-68 which provide tougher penalties for the criminal use of firearms, new offences related to firearms smuggling and trafficking; and

"Whereas existing laws requiring the registration of handguns has done little to reduce the number of crimes committed with handguns or lower the volume of handguns smuggled into Canada; and

"Whereas the national gun registration provisions of Bill C-68 will result in a massive misallocation of the limited resources available to law enforcement agencies, with non-practical effect on the traffic in illegal firearms or the use of guns in violent crimes; and

"Whereas the gun registration provisions of Bill C-68 will take police officers off the street and involve them in bureaucracy rather than fighting crime, and will make the task of real gun control more difficult and dangerous for police officers;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the province of Ontario to continue to urge the government of Canada to repeal from Bill C-68 those provisions for a compulsory registration of all firearms."

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CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr Gilles E. Morin (Carleton East): I have a petition signed by a thousand of my constituents and it relates to the opening of a casino in my riding. Of course they are totally opposed to it, and it reads as follows:

"We, the residents of Gloucester and the surrounding area, wish to express our firm opposition to the establishment of a gambling casino in this residential community, in close proximity to two local high schools" — that is, the Lester B. Pearson high school and the Gloucester High School. "Though you may already be aware of our concerns, we wish to communicate to the Legislature the widespread opposition which this has generated in the community.

"We also wish to communicate our disappointment in the total lack of democratic consultation on the part of our local city council. Decisions were made and voted on prior to any meaningful public input.

"We are also hereby expressing our concern for those families who will be hurt through gambling addiction, with the resulting problems of suicide, divorce, family violence and impoverishment.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose the establishment of a charity casino in Gloucester, Ontario."

I have affixed my signature.

ABORTION

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I have a petition that's signed by many residents of the regional municipality of Sudbury. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness, and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has the exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

BEAR HUNTING

Mr Bill Grimmer (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I have a petition which I'd like to present today. It was forwarded to me for presentation and signed by 25 residents of Ontario, most of whom live in my riding. In accordance with the standing orders, as is my practice, I'll summarize my petition by saying that it supports the current rules regarding black bear hunting.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ministry of Community and Social Services is currently engaged in a restructuring process across all communities in Ontario which will affect all people and their families supported by developmental services; and

"Whereas the consultation process was selective and limited; and

"Whereas those who require services are being pitted against those who have services; and

"Whereas service to one group should not be at the expense of another, regardless of age or language; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Community and Social Services 'corporate agenda' is one of wholesale destruction of the support system for the vulnerable; and

"Whereas this corporate agenda will threaten the health, safety and likely the lives of many disabled people;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to stop this destructive restructuring project and provide adequate funding for quality services to the developmentally disabled."

I add my signature.

TUITION FEES

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): I have a petition that's signed by hundreds of students from the University of Toronto, calling on post-secondary education to be accessible for all.

"Whereas student and youth unemployment continues to run at more than twice the national unemployment rate; and

"Whereas a post-secondary education is often the only way to get a decent job; and

"Whereas the Harris government is raising tuition fees by 20% over the next two years and deregulating fees in graduate programs; and

"Whereas this is reducing access to education for workers and the poor, as evidenced by the drop in university applications, especially among the children of the poor; and

"Further, since education should be a right for all, not just the wealthy;

"We, the undersigned, call on the provincial government to immediately freeze tuition and create a grants program for needy students."

I've affixed my name to that petition.

PORT DOVER HARBOUR MUSEUM

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and is titled "Open the Museum." It is signed by people from London, St Thomas, Port Stanley, Eden, as well as residents of my riding of Norfolk.

"Whereas the Port Dover Harbour Museum addition was built with taxpayers' dollars in 1992 but has never opened to the public; and

"Whereas jobs in tourism, fishing and the marine industry are key to our area economy and way of life; and

"Whereas lawsuits, regulations and red tape have kept the museum closed; and

"Whereas all four levels of government and their attendant bureaucracies have proven incapable of opening the museum;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cut through the red tape and open the new addition to the Port Dover Harbour Museum."

I agree with this petition and hereby affix my signature to it.

CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition which reads as follows:

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is trying to impose so-called charity casinos on 44 communities across Ontario as a vehicle to make profits from gambling for government coffers; and

"Whereas these gambling halls will bleed from the communities on which they are imposed the discretionary dollars which might otherwise be spent on goods and services; and

"Whereas the Harris government is attempting to bribe cash-strapped municipalities to accept the new gambling halls by promising to pay a so-called administration fee to operate slot machines in the casinos; and

"Whereas the Harris government is attempting to coerce municipalities into accepting the new 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week gambling halls by suggesting that charities may not receive funding;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon the Mike Harris government to halt the imposition of new gambling

halls, so-called charity casinos, on communities across Ontario."

I affix my signature as I'm in full agreement with this petition.

UNITED EMPIRE LOYALISTS

Mr Harry Danford (Hastings-Peterborough): A petition to the Legislature in regard to the important role the United Empire Loyalists played in Ontario. I will read the main line:

"That the government of Ontario ensure that a suitable learning unit on the United Empire Loyalists be included in the history curriculum for Ontario schools."

This is signed by a number of constituents from the Guelph area and it's my pleasure to add my signature.

TVONTARIO

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): I have a petition that reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas TVOntario is owned by the people of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has opposed public support for maintaining TVOntario as a publicly owned and funded educational broadcaster by putting TVO through a privatization review; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has not confirmed that full public participation will be part of this privatization review;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to hold open and honest public consultation with the people of Ontario before making a decision on the future of TVOntario."

That's signed by a good number of my constituents from places like Weagamow Lake and North Caribou, and I attach my signature as well.

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): I have a petition that was presented to me by Mr John Dalrymple from Newmarket. I also have been asked by the member for York Centre, the Honourable Al Palladini, to present a similar petition on his behalf. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas nurses in Ontario often experience coercion to participate in practices which directly contravene their deeply held ethical standards; and

"Whereas pharmacists in Ontario are often pressured to dispense and/or sell chemicals and/or devices contrary to their moral or religious beliefs; and

"Whereas public health workers in Ontario are expected to assist in providing controversial services and promoting controversial materials against their consciences; and

"Whereas physicians in Ontario often experience pressure to give referrals for medications, treatments and/or procedures which they believe to be gravely immoral; and

"Whereas competent health care workers and students in various health care disciplines in Ontario have been denied training, employment, continued employment and advancement in their intended fields and suffered other forms of unjust discrimination because of the dictates of their consciences; and

"Whereas the health care workers experiencing such unjust discrimination have at present no practical and accessible legal means to protect themselves;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers, prohibiting coercion of and unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary to the dictates of their consciences and establishing penalties for such coercion and unjust discrimination."

I am pleased to add my name to this petition.

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MOTIONS

1998 ONTARIO BUDGET

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to move a motion respecting the debate on the budget motion without notice.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Agreed? It is agreed.

Hon Mr Sterling: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 57(b), there be five sessional days allotted for debate on the budget motion and any amendments thereto, and that all other provisions of standing order 57 apply.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

OPPOSITION DAY

MULTILATERAL AGREEMENT ON INVESTMENT

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): Speaker, I would ask unanimous consent to be able to move the motion standing in the name of Mr Hampton.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it agreed? It is agreed.

Mr Silipo: I move, on behalf of Mr Hampton:

Whereas the federal Liberal government in Ottawa is negotiating a multilateral agreement on trade, ignoring the clear opposition of many provincial governments, municipalities and Canadians throughout the country; and

Whereas the MAI, negotiated for years in secret by the federal Liberals before activists forced it into the open, would provide a charter of freedoms for corporate investors with no clear benefits for the people of Canada; and

Whereas supporters of MAI, especially the trade minister and other members of the Liberal cabinet in Ottawa, show no appreciation for the importance of strong environmental protection, high-quality health care and vibrant public education to the stable economy of our communities, our province and our country; and

Whereas the Ontario government has joined other provinces in expressing reservations about the draft MAI; and

Whereas growing opposition throughout Canada and the world has forced a delay in negotiations but has not killed the proposed MAI;

Be it therefore resolved that this House urges the federal government to immediately demand a halt to the current MAI negotiations, and call on the government to refuse to be part of any agreement that would enshrine the rights of corporate investors over the rights of the people of Canada and other countries around the world.

I am happy to have the chance to lead off debate for our caucus on this. We had placed this motion last week and agreed at that time to have it delayed for a week so that we could deal with the equally important but more time-pressing issue of the hepatitis C resolution, which we were happy to do. We are, however, happy that this motion is in front of us this afternoon.

The "whereases" and the resolution itself speak for themselves but, as always, it's appropriate to expand a little bit on those premises.

We believe that the multilateral agreement on trade that has been under negotiation between Canada and the other countries that belong to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development would pose some very serious problems for this country and for this province. We believe that because of the limitations that would be placed upon our ability as a country and as a provincial jurisdiction to make laws protecting our interests in our own businesses, in our own ventures, in our own areas, whether those be in the area of health care or many other areas, it would be wrong to proceed with this agreement.

This is an agreement that has been under negotiation for a few years now. The negotiations began some time back in 1995. They began, as our resolution clearly sets out, in secret, by the federal government's talking and negotiating with representatives of other governments from the OECD countries. In fact, it took some time before the federal government admitted publicly that these negotiations were actually taking place. That speaks volumes to the concerns that not only we have but that thousands of Canadians have about why our country, our government, would be negotiating such an agreement without even being prepared to admit for a long time that this agreement would be there.

We know that there has now been a pause, but our concerns remain. I want to come back to that at the end of

my comments. But just to set a little context, what is it that this particular agreement, known in the jargon as MAI, this multilateral agreement on trade, would do? If this agreement were to proceed in its current form or even in slightly amended forms, it would mean that the treaty would prohibit any government signing this agreement from setting conditions for foreign investment, such as that local people be hired or that locally made goods be purchased. It would prohibit, for example, governments from ever giving preference to a company because it is locally based. It would set up a tribunal where foreign corporations could demand compensation from governments for any law or purchasing decision that does not conform to the treaty. The decision of this tribunal, whose proceedings would be completely secret, would be binding and unappealable and would take precedence over any of the country's existing laws.

Clearly the jurisdiction, freedom and independence of Canada and the provinces to make decisions in the areas we now do would be severely compromised if this agreement were to proceed.

Some people have said, "What's so different between this and the North American free trade agreement?" We as a political party continue to be opposed to and have significant reservations about the North American trade agreement, but at least there one could argue that there is an ability, although difficult to implement, for governments to withdraw after giving six months' notice.

In this particular agreement, if the MAI were to proceed, countries would not be able to withdraw, once they signed the agreement, for five years, and if a country did decide to withdraw, all foreign investments made during the time the treaty was in force would be given protection for a period of 20 years. So it really binds future governments; it would bind future governments in a very serious and significant way. That is another major concern we have.

But if that were not enough, one other major area I want to highlight briefly is what would happen with respect to the areas of expropriation, as they're called, under the treaty. The treaty would force countries to compensate foreign corporations for expropriation. As the treaty is currently drafted, these corporations would have to be compensated for any government measure that causes them the loss not only of current assets but of any future profits they might have made.

Essentially, to put it in language that I find easier to understand and that perhaps most people would also appreciate, it would mean that in not a long time, the standards international corporations could find as being the lowest standards in any of the countries signatory to this would become the standards that would apply to any country.

If we had, for example, higher standards on environmental concerns, if we had higher standards with respect to any other areas this treaty would affect, it would mean that a company that could find a provision in another country that would be part of this agreement would be able to claim that the same kinds of standards ought to be

applied, because we could not apply any higher standards and preferential treatment could not be given to companies that were locally based, whether Ontarian or Canadian, that were prepared to adhere to those higher standards.

The long and the short of it is that this would diminish greatly our ability as a jurisdiction and as a country to continue to set the rules that we collectively, through the people and through the democratic process, believe are appropriate.

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It is not about broadening trade. We certainly can agree with the notion of broadening trade. It is about — and this is the greater concern we have — limiting severely the rights of governments to make decisions and giving to international corporations the right to make, directly and indirectly, more and more of these decisions, to set more and more of those standards.

We understand now that the negotiations have paused, that there has been a period of six months called for a pause. Our concern here is that while we rejoice about the fact that negotiations are not proceeding, we do not for one minute believe that this issue is dead. Quite frankly, we want it to die. We don't believe that the current approach makes any sense and we don't want to see what trade minister Sergio Marchi said, that they're simply making a pit stop on the journey to a deal. We want to make sure that this deal, in its current form or in any form that resembles it, does not continue, does not proceed.

We call upon this Legislative Assembly today to join other legislative assemblies across this country — issues that have crossed partisan positions — to take a very strong position.

I just want to note in closing that even our own economic development minister here in Ontario, Mr Palladini, apparently said after a meeting with his federal and provincial colleagues, "We certainly don't want to create an atmosphere where investors are going to come into Ontario and ask us to alter our environmental standards." We agree with that. We urge the government members to support this resolution and we hope that our Liberal colleagues, despite the fact that it's their cousins in Ottawa who are trying to push this deal through, will also see the wisdom of supporting this resolution and retaining, by virtue of adopting this resolution, the sense that it should be the governments of this country — the government of Canada and the governments of the provinces — that continue to have the jurisdiction to set standards, and not companies from other countries.

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough-Ellesmere): I am pleased to have the opportunity today to address this very important issue. The Ontario government welcomes public discussion on the multilateral agreement on investment, which the federal government is currently negotiating with the member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. Members of the OECD include Canada and most of the world's industrialized economies, like the United States, most European countries, Japan, New Zealand, Australia, Mexico and Korea.

I understand that at last week's OECD ministerial meeting, a decision was taken to extend negotiations. Some parties, including the Canadian federal government, feel it would be preferable to continue discussions in the larger forum of the World Trade Organization, or WTO, as it is known. The WTO includes both developed and developing countries and would reflect a broader range of concerns, as well as including some of the jurisdictions where Canadian business has experienced problems in the past. In any case, all countries appear to agree that it is essential to take some time necessary to reach a good agreement.

The central purpose of the agreement would be to provide a broad multilateral framework of agreed principles and commitments governing the treatment of foreign investment. This way, all countries can participate on an equal footing in the international marketplace for investment.

The Ontario government supports the negotiation of an investment treaty. However, we want to ensure that any agreement provides meaningful commercial benefits for Canadian businesses that make investments in other countries. As well, the agreement must be carefully thought out to ensure that it resolves the actual problems business is experiencing abroad rather than creating new problems at home.

On this first point, business people consulted by our government indicate that the MAI does address some issues of importance to investors. However, the agreement does not touch on some of the more fundamental problems that business faces when investing in third markets. Some of these problems have had to do with the need for common accounting rules, transparent laws and regulations that clearly identify ownership of real and personal property. Our position is that governments involved in negotiating the agreement should work on ways to address some of the investment issues I have just mentioned.

In addition, we must ensure that the investor-state dispute settlement provisions provide an adequate means of redress for investors. The dispute settlement process should be transparent so that investors can better understand the process and know how to present a claim successfully.

Although the Ontario government is willing to support an investment treaty in principle, there are a number of issues that must be resolved before we can make a firm commitment of support.

Ontario has particular concerns with the expropriation provisions of the MAI. Our position is that the MAI must contain provisions to ensure that governments can continue to introduce regulatory changes, such as including protection of the environment, without being challenged by investors. In other words, Ontario must retain its ability to enforce existing environmental and labour standards, and indeed to strengthen them over time, without being exposed to claims for compensation by affected parties.

In fact, to be of significant benefit, provisions should be included in the MAI to ensure that jurisdictions cannot

relax environmental or labour standards to attract foreign investment.

Now that I have set out the Ontario government's position with regard to the MAI, please allow me a moment to move on to a broader subject — the importance of international trade to Ontario's economy. Make no mistake about it: This government places a very high priority on Ontario's international trading arrangements. I want to take a few minutes to describe just how vital international trade is to Ontario's economy.

Our economic growth, job creation and future economic prosperity depend on how successfully the private sector takes advantage of international trade and investment opportunities. Our commitment is to helping Ontario companies discover and develop new export opportunities.

Ontario has one of the world's most open export-oriented economies. Ontario's exports of goods and services to foreign markets have increased by about 35% over the past three years. In 1997, the value of our sales in foreign markets represented the equivalent of 40% of the value of all of Ontario's economic activity. Exports support 1.5 million jobs across the province. About 10,000 direct and indirect jobs are created for every \$1 billion of goods exported.

Today, our exports are chiefly high value added goods and services. A significant portion come from knowledge-based, technologically advanced industries such as machinery, equipment, automobiles, telecommunications and financial and business services.

Some key factors that contribute to Ontario's export successes include our central location in North America; the fact that we have a cost-competitive, educated and productive workforce; a well-developed infrastructure; competitive corporate tax rates; a high quality of life; a competitive Canadian dollar; a multicultural population, which makes Ontario Canada's most ethnically diverse province; and competitive, technology-intensive products and services.

As an exporting jurisdiction, Ontario has performed well. But it could be doing much better. In 1997, almost 90% of our exports went to the United States, and they were highly concentrated in a few sectors such as the automotive industry. According to Statistics Canada data, about 3% of our exports go to Asia and 1% to Latin America, two of the world's fastest-growing economic regions. Only 3.5% of our exports go to Europe, and less than 1% to Africa and the Middle East.

In international trade we need to continue to seek out new markets and diversify our export base. While we have not in the past concentrated on such markets as Latin America, the recent Canada-Chile free trade agreement and the current free trade agreement of the Americas negotiations should provide us with both the incentive and the opportunity to engage in these markets. Indeed, the Ontario government will be following up on the recent successful Team Canada mission to Latin America to ensure that Ontario business benefits from the opportunities identified.

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As the private and public sectors work together in Ontario to explore new export opportunities, diversification will be one of our key challenges. We need more exporting companies, a more diverse range of export markets and a more diverse range of goods and services to sell internationally.

The Pacific Rim nations will need significant amounts of infrastructure development in the coming years. Ontario, which is a world leader in key infrastructure, such as transportation, telecommunications, education, resource management, environmental services and health, is well positioned to capture a share of this market.

Latin American import growth is predicted to exceed 12% a year through the year 2000. The Mercosur trading union, which is Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay with the associate members Chile and Bolivia, the world's fourth-largest integrated market, is experiencing dramatic growth. Ontario's combined exports to Mercosur in 1997 totalled \$754 million, a 107% increase over 1996. Mexico imported \$565 million from Ontario in 1997. As Mexican markets recover from the downturn caused by the 1995 peso crisis, important opportunities for Ontario exporters are emerging in a range of economic sectors.

Stimulating Ontario's export capacity to the Pacific Rim and Latin America alone will create thousands of jobs for Ontarians.

The government helps build Ontario's export base through the work of its Ontario International Trade Corp and conducts a number of international trade missions each year.

In January, for example, Premier Harris and members of the Ontario International Trade Corp travelled with representatives of about 175 Ontario companies on a Team Canada trade mission to Chile, Argentina, Brazil and Mexico. It was a productive trip to an international market of growing importance. Ontario's exports to those four countries exceeded \$1.4 billion in 1997.

The government continues to plan other international trade missions to enhance Ontario's profile and to help open up new export markets.

Last December, just prior to the Team Canada trade mission to Latin America, the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism organized the first-ever Trade Winds forum for Ontario companies looking to do business in Latin America. It proved to be very successful. More than 200 Ontario companies took part in the conference and 11 corporations co-sponsored it. Top business leaders from small and large business firms shared their expertise and advice. The forum enhanced Ontario's ability to reach new export markets and to create related jobs. As a result, the ministry will hold more such conferences in advance of major trade missions.

As the Ontario government's lead trade agency, the OITC strives to make it even easier and simpler for companies to use export development services offered by all ministries. One such service offered by OITC is the new exporters to border states program. It provides how-to

seminars for Ontario business people wanting to enter or to expand operations in the American market.

This program offers business people the opportunity to travel to key American markets, such as Buffalo, Detroit, Boston, Atlanta and Chicago, and to get concrete information from leading professionals about matters such as banking, accounting, business immigration, marketing, legal matters, distribution and moving goods through customs. Last year the ministry organized about a dozen such workshops for more than 160 companies.

The Ontario government is committed to creating a more export-oriented culture in this province. To that end, the government has worked closely with our federal counterparts, municipal officials and business associations to create the Canada-Ontario Export Forum. The group, also known as Trade Team Ontario, provides potential exporters with vital information and counselling.

The Ontario government has also created a Web site with information about our economy, our business climate and our business successes. The home page address is www.Ontario-Canada.com. The ministry has also completed the transformation of Challenges, a traditional business-oriented ministry publication, into an online version that engages business people in an interactive discussion of the economic challenges facing Ontario. The ministry has also launched the Ontario Business Report, a newsletter focusing on Ontario business and on the trends, challenges and issues that are reshaping the province's business climate. Issued 10 times a year, the report is distributed to about 15,000 businesses, entrepreneurs, associations and government offices.

The Ontario International Trade Corp is the government's lead export development agency. Its mandate lies in building an export culture in Ontario that stimulates job creation, coaching and assisting companies to respond to world export opportunities. In 1997-98, the OITC worked with more than 1,800 firms, helping them to start exporting or to expand their international marketing efforts. The OITC helped 270 Ontario companies achieve more than \$360 million in export sales in 1997-98.

OITC's functions include promoting and marketing Ontario as a high-quality supplier of goods and services to the world, particularly in the growing economies of Asia and Latin America, as well as other promising jurisdictions beyond North America; delivering affordable programs and services geared to helping Ontario business export; helping businesses identify high-growth markets and address export barriers; and brokering trade by informing Ontario firms about potential business opportunities and linking them with foreign buyers.

The OITC has a particular interest in working with Ontario's small and medium-sized firms, which often lack the expertise, knowledge and resources to capitalize on export opportunities.

Only about 15% of Ontario's small and medium-sized businesses sell their goods and services internationally. Of those that do, few focus on markets beyond the nearby states. OITC responds to the specific needs of these clients with information and expertise to identify and respond to

export opportunities; training in how to develop new markets; and help in finding partners to share the cost and risks of venturing abroad.

Currently, the OITC's client base comprises approximately 16,000 small and medium-sized enterprises, domestic and international business organizations, representatives of the federal government and foreign governments, and international business contacts who once resided in Ontario. In addition, through its programs and services, the OITC makes contact with about 5,100 exporters each year.

The government takes part in Team Canada trade missions and leads its own Team Ontario missions to open doors for Ontario firms seeking business in promising international markets. OITC contributes to both of these activities.

As you can see, the Ontario government will only support a multilateral agreement on investment that will be good for Canadians and Ontarians. While international negotiations continue on that front, we will continue to move forward on our own to help position Ontario companies in the forefront of the global trading action into the next century.

1540

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I want to start by saying something I guess we all know, and that's how important our export business is to Ontario.

I was struck in the budget by the page that showed that Ontario's gross domestic product now is about 45% export. That's an amazingly high number. Just seven years ago it was under 30%. We now have an Ontario economy that is heavily dependent on exports. In the same document, just to provide the public with a comparison — this is the Ontario number here, 45%. We think of Japan as an export-oriented country. Less than 10% of their economy is export. Here we have in Ontario 45% of our economy dependent on exports, larger than virtually any other industrial country in the world and dramatically higher than the average for Canada. That's point one. It is in all of our interests that we encourage export development.

The second thing that struck me was that 90% of this now goes to the US. We have essentially an export-driven economy — 45% of our economy — and 90% of it goes to the US. By the way, about half of that is auto. Think about the potential risk to the Ontario economy. A huge part of our economy now is export-driven, up 50% over the last seven years; 45% of our economy is in the US, and that heavily reliant on auto.

I've always been a bit disappointed that our exports to the rest of the world have not shown much growth at all. That takes nothing away from building our business in the US, but I've been very disappointed that for the last 10 years we have not seen substantial development in our exports to the rest of the world.

It points out the risk. Business people realize that it's always risky to have one dominant customer, because if that one dominant customer's business goes a little bit bad, you've got a problem. We've benefited very much in Ontario — in fact, the Ontario economy has been driven

by exports to the US. The budget points that out. That has been the key to our success over the last nine years: exports to the US, heavily auto.

There will be a downturn in the US. That's just the way it works, as we all know. It's just a question of when, hopefully not in the immediate future. When that happens, as they say, when the US sneezes, we get a cold, or as Trudeau I think used to say, when the elephant rolls over, it can crush those around it. I say to all of us, we are benefiting very much by a strong US economy — it is very much driving the Ontario economy, and thank goodness for it — but that will not last forever.

I happen to think we have an enormously unique situation here in Ontario. We have business people who live here who have come literally from around the world. I might add, by the way, that many of them came here as students. Many of our major international business people born in other countries came to university here in Ontario and chose either to stay or to go back and then come and live here in Canada. We have an enormous wealth of business talent who can do business around the world.

We also have the head offices of an awful lot of Canadian companies located here in Ontario, particularly in the GTA, plus we have here in Toronto the consular corps from virtually every country in the world.

So we have the potential, with head offices here, business people used to doing business in countries literally around the world, the access to the diplomatic corps here in Ontario, with all those things available, to dramatically improve our export business. In my opinion, let's recognize that when the US downturn happens, a lot of our businesses in Ontario are dependent on their ability to export and their key customer will see a downturn.

In my experience, it's human nature; in fact, it's almost inevitable: If the US economy turns down and the US is buying from a plant in the US and a plant in Canada, the first plant that will see its orders cut will be the Canadian plant. It's just the way it works. The point of all that is it's in our best interest to find ways that we develop international trade on a much-accelerated basis.

Then we get down to the challenge of the specifics of the MAI agreement here. By the way, I might add, it's not an agreement; it is a proposal that's been put forward after three years of negotiations, not negotiations in secret because I can recall people talking to me three years ago about the beginning of the talks on the multinational agreement.

Then the question is, is this process the right one to reach an agreement? Let's recognize that the agreement does have a pretty profound impact on Ontario. My colleague Mike Gravelle, who is our critic for culture, and the many organizations he works with are particularly worried about the impact it could have on our Canadian cultural organizations and industry.

One of the previous speakers mentioned: "Is this the right forum? Would the World Trade Organization perhaps be a better forum for dealing with the necessary agreements?"

We are now asked to do two things. One is, do we collectively believe there is the need to increase the levels of certainty around international trade? I think if you talk to business people, they'd say there is. If they are going to invest in another country, they would like the maximum certainty that the investment is protected, that they are protected by some international laws from losing that investment. It makes sense. Similarly, I might add, individuals and companies that want to invest in Canada want the same assurances that they will have some basic protection.

At the same time, we here in Canada, we here in Ontario, want to protect ourselves from companies that would perhaps look for some way to not obey the environmental standards that we have here, our cultural demands that we have. So we are now forced to either support the current proposals coming forward on the MAI or look for another approach.

Frankly, I think there is significant concern about the specifics of the proposals that have come forward so far. While I'm very supportive of improving the clarity of international trading arrangements, I have some significant concerns about the specifics we are faced with. I'm supportive very much of a process that improves it. I'm sufficiently concerned about the specifics of the MAI that I am attracted to the motion that's before us here today.

1550

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I'm very pleased to have a few moments to talk about this motion of ours, introduced by our leader, because it is one of the most important issues we will ever have to deal with in this province and in this country.

I want to say that the word "mai" in Italian means "never." I hope this multilateral agreement on investments never comes to pass, because if it does, nations and citizens are going to be in serious trouble.

I want to say as well that you will recall how much of a fighter M. Chrétien was during the North American free trade agreement. He was fighting as that great Liberal, saying: "This is a bad deal. When we get into power, we're going to change it. Trust me." No sooner did that man get into power than he kind of liked it. He said: "This is good. We don't have to change it. We don't have to worry about the environment or this labour stuff, this union stuff. Who needs that kind of stuff?"

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: I'm only attacking the federal Liberals at the moment so they shouldn't get worried about this next to me here.

The federal Liberals have become the champions of free trade, the champions of multilateral agreements and investments. M. Marchi and M. Chrétien are the two biggest cheerleaders of this opening of the markets across the globe. You have M. Chrétien saying: "Globalization is inevitable. There's really nothing we can do. Let's not fight it, let's just give in. Let's just accept this deal because there's nothing we can do."

That is why he and a few other people like Professor Alan Rugman, someone who has been very well known to the Liberals federally — he's a professor who prepared a background paper on this. He did it and he advised the federal Liberal government to do so on the sneak and not let anyone know about its contents. So M. Chrétien and his fine Liberal friends have known about this for years, let's say for months, not to exaggerate, but they knew what was contained in those documents because Professor Rugman was part of those discussions.

They have kept everybody in the dark for a reason. They know federally that as soon as this issue becomes public, to the extent that people understand it, they're going to be fighting it. Most humans don't have a clue what MAI stands for. I wager to say a lot of MPPs in this room don't know what MAI stands for, let alone the millions of Ontarians across this province who have never heard of this word "mai" or MAI. They've never heard of it. It is an acronym that most people can't spell out. If the people in here don't know anything about this agreement, how do you expect that ordinary people out there would understand what this agreement is all about? They kept people in the dark.

You will know, Speaker, that when these MPPs speak about it, they use acronyms. Why do they use acronyms? Because they don't know what they stand for. Isn't that true? For example, people use the OECD. They don't spell it out. Do you know what OECD means, Speaker? It's complicated. Of course you don't know. I don't blame you. Twenty-nine industrialized countries in the world belong to this Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development and these 29 developed countries are setting the rules for free trade across the globe.

Do you know who is sitting around those tables? It certainly isn't my grandmother. It certainly isn't my brother sitting at those round table discussions. I'm certain it isn't even any brother, relative, of the member from Kitchener — I am convinced of it — so he wouldn't have a clue as to its contents. Do you know who is there? The financial institutions.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Johnston.

Mr Marchese: Well, Daniel Johnson is around. He knows what this is about. He's a fine federal Liberal who left the Liberal benches a while ago.

Mr Gary L. Leadston (Kitchener-Wilmot): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member opposite was wondering what "mai" means. I heard recently that it means "never" in Italian. That might be helpful to the speaker.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: I'm sure he's got a word for that in German. We should work on it in a different language because it means the same in every language. It means "never" in every language. "It should not come to pass."

This agreement is being worked out by financial institutions that sit at the table, the most powerful of the Fortune 500 transnational companies, deciding the rules for international investment on this issue.

Mr Wildman: Donald Johnston —

Mr Marchese: Donald Johnston was a fine Liberal at one time. I suspect he's still a fine Liberal, but he became an independent, if I remember correctly, because there was some disagreement with his more Liberal-minded friends. But it's another matter. We shouldn't be diverted from this important discussion.

The point is that this is going on behind the scenes, similar to what the Tories have been doing in Ontario, working behind the scenes like marionettes expressing the wishes of the corporations behind them that tell them what to do. The Fortune 500 corporations, the multinationals, are writing up these agreements. That's why it's an insidious document.

This is the 50th anniversary of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as well. These rights inscribed 50 years ago to give basic protections to citizens will be overridden by this MAI. We're celebrating the 50th anniversary of these basic rights, and they will be gone because these corporations are writing an economic globalization, a new economic order, a political monoculture, a world view designed for and by capital, people with a great deal of pecunia, with grana in their pockets. These are the people who are doing it, and they're doing it in a way that will override our economies, override our social, cultural and environmental rights in this province and in this country.

You will have observed, if you've followed this discussion on the multilateral agreement on investment, that there are no rules to respect our economy; there are no rules to respect our social, cultural and environmental rights. There are no rules.

I tell you this: The president of the United States Council for International Business said, "We will oppose any and all measures to create or even imply binding obligations for governments or business related to the environment or labour."

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Outrageous.

Mr Marchese: It's not even outrageous; they're clearly telling you that any protections you may want to write into this document with respect to the environment, labour, cultural and social programs are gone because the big boys are telling you they will not have them.

They are talking about eliminating performance requirements. Trade-related investment measures which in the past required corporations to invest in the local economy, hire locally or buy a certain amount of their imports for a product from the host country will be gone. We will have to respect what's called "national treatment" — treatment no less favourable than that available to nationals within investing states. We're dealing with creating a charter of rights for the richest corporations in the world, with no respect to national boundaries, no respect whatsoever to any national border.

They have measures contained in it called "rollback clauses," which are designed to ensure that any pieces of legislation or regulation measures of member countries that did not conform with MAI would be reduced and/or

eliminated. They have standstill provisions which would forbid any future government in Ottawa or the province to take public ownership over a sector of the economy that had been previously privatized.

What is the role of government? The role of government is never to interfere, according to these transnational companies, but to interfere only to protect their investments. The role of government is to ensure protection of foreign corporations and to provide a safe haven for profitable transnational corporations. That is the extent of the role of government.

1600

This agreement is the most deleterious agreement we will ever have to deal with and fight. I urge the people who are watching today's program on this very issue to call us. We will send them all the information they need to see how municipalities and provinces are going to be adversely affected because they will lose their social policy instruments; they will be taken away by this agreement. Write us to tell us how we can join forces to fight this multilateral agreement on investment, which will not go away. The Liberals at the federal level are not going to let this go away. It is inexorably driven by the Liberals and inexorably driven by the multinational companies that want this trade agreement to protect their investments. I urge everybody watching to support us as we fight it in the next six months.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to a certain bill.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): The following is the title of the bill to which Her Honour did assent:

Bill 146, An Act to protect Farming and Food Production / Projet de loi 146, Loi protégeant l'agriculture et la production alimentaire.

MULTILATERAL AGREEMENT

ON INVESTMENT

(continued)

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): It's certainly a pleasure for me to be able to respond to this resolution. I have some empathy for the member for Fort York and his concerns with the federal Liberals having campaigned five or six years ago against free trade and then coming in and doing a flip-flop, which is consistent, being Liberals. I can understand his real concerns, especially with the helicopter deal. They stopped that and now they're out trying to buy helicopters, and on it goes with Liberal positioning. It's not surprising and I can understand why you would be concerned.

Canada was built on the principles of law, order and good government. This has resulted in a business culture here in Canada in which people, investors and companies expect to be treated fairly and expect that agreements will be honoured. That has been traditional here in our country. We have a tendency to judge the need for laws and sanctions based on how such business matters are handled here in Canada. This has led to many local groups questioning the need for the multilateral agreement on investment.

Some very legitimate concerns have been expressed, and these relate to the concerns about the multilateral agreement on investment's impact on our ability to enforce labour and environmental standards and on the government's ability to carry out regulatory or legislative action that is in the Canadian public's best interests. These concerns must be addressed before an agreement can be reached. We must ensure that we can continue to introduce the regulatory changes, including the protection of the environment, without being challenged by our investors. We must also ensure that the multilateral agreement on investment does not mean differential treatment of foreign and domestic investors. Ontarians will not tolerate an agreement that grants better treatment to outside interests than to Canadians.

We must recognize there are significant problems that the MAI seeks to overcome. Other governments do not always observe the same rules of fairness for investors that we expect here in Canada. Recent experiences in Quebec make that point.

A Canadian hotel management company based in Halifax was forced to seek a court order from the Quebec judiciary to seize a Russian Aeroflot airliner. The Canadian company had been partners with Aeroflot in a hotel venture in Moscow which resulted in an investment dispute. Things got ugly and the two parties went to court. Although the Canadian company was awarded legal damages of some \$8 million, it has never been able to collect that \$8 million. Recently the day-long detention of the Aeroflot jetliner in Quebec won a grudging promise from the Russian partners that they would indeed pay the \$8 million by week's end.

While the Canadian company's tactics seem to have worked in this particular instance, it's a dangerous way of enforcing settlements. This could have led to a very nasty international incident. This little caper illustrates the risks Canadian investors face overseas and the risks we face in not having an agreement in place. While there are great opportunities to make money outside of Canada, foreign investment partners have a habit of muscling out international partners just when a joint venture starts showing a profit. There are lots of examples where this has happened. Many Canadians have war stories on out-of-country investment deals gone wrong, partnerships soured and property seized by foreign governments.

The MAI would put in place clear rules to govern international investment. That's a good thing, and one of the strongest arguments in its favour. We cannot hide from this issue. Trade and investment are indeed the key

engines of economic growth. Outward Canadian investment makes a vital contribution to our economic prosperity. In 1997, direct Canadian investment abroad totalled \$194 billion, a threefold increase since 1986.

An example I'm aware of is the establishment of Welcome to Canada, a retail store in Moscow specializing in Canadian goods and fashions. In this instance, not only the goods featured in the store but all the fixtures and design principles were exported from Canada. That's an example of a success story.

Conversely, foreign direct investment in Canada has also doubled since 1986. It reached \$188 billion in 1997. This investment contributed significantly to job creation and greater prosperity. Foreign firms operating in Canada employ 10% of our workforce. As well, 10% of all new direct annual investment in Canada is made by foreign-owned firms that are operating here. Of course, the policies of this government have made Ontario much more attractive to that investment by reducing taxes, red tape and bureaucracy.

While investment is a two-way street, we must ensure that any MAI serves Canada's interest and supports Canadian values. We must have ironclad reservations and guarantees that would preserve Canada's freedom of action at both the federal and provincial levels with respect to key areas such as health care, social programs and education. We also need to ensure that environmental laws are not jeopardized in any way and that we have the continued ability to maintain current measures relating to such diverse activities as transportation, financial services, communications, energy, the fisheries, the auto industry and land and real estate.

We must also ensure that government policy prerogatives with respect to investment review, privatization practices, government financing, agriculture, the supply management system and the management of natural resources are protected. These country-specific reservations are critical to ensuring that Canada's and Ontario's interests are addressed within the text of the proposed MAI.

In conclusion, this year marks the 50th anniversary of GATT, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. Since then, we have seen an orderly expansion of the rules of fair and open trade with other countries. This has led to uninterrupted growth in exports, a key factor in our economic wellbeing. We have benefited tremendously from the international trading system that has emerged. It has vastly improved access for our goods and services in a truly global market.

Multilateral rules on investment are a natural extension to the rules of trade in goods and services. Getting the right rules for investment will take time and effort. All governments involved must take the time to get it right. No country is committed to any text at this stage. Nothing can be agreed upon until the entire agreement is agreed upon.

Canada must continue to negotiate an agreement that ensures that our objectives for continued economic prosperity are met, while problems with foreign investment practices are addressed and curtailed. Ontario is willing to

support the MAI in principle, but issues must be resolved before we can make a firm commitment.

1610

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): It's a pleasure for me today to rise to speak to this resolution, although I must admit I would much rather have used the valuable time in this Legislature to debate issues such as health care, education or the future of kids in this province.

But we have a resolution before us today in which in the final paragraph, the "Be it therefore resolved," I find one part is somewhat different from the other and is almost a reversal. First it says that we "immediately demand a halt to the current MAI negotiations" — very clear, those words — but then it goes on to say, "and call on the government to refuse to be part of any agreement...."

If you're going to halt negotiations on one hand, how can you then go on and call on the government to be part of an agreement? I find that a little bit difficult to understand, but in any event, I feel personally that we should be at the negotiating table, whatever it is. Whether it be the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, whether it be the World Trade Organization, or wherever it's at, I think we should be at that table. I don't think that taking your football and going home is any way to participate in the game.

I want to point out that the federal minister has said he would refuse to sign any deal that would limit the Canadian government's powers to regulate health, social services, aboriginal affairs and education. He also insists that Canadian cultural industries not be touched by the deal. He said, "I don't think the protection of some very fundamental values is being strident."

I want to quote too one of the leading spokespersons in this debate about the MAI, Maude Barlow:

"I have to say that Canada did hold firmer than I thought they would," said Maude Barlow, chairwoman of the Council of Canadians. 'What the minister clearly said was that he was annoyed with the OECD' for not communicating better with the people whom the deal will affect.

"I think Canada took one of the strongest stands," Ms Barlow said."

I point out that when it comes to world investment, there is some \$180 billion a year invested in Canada by foreign countries and, in turn, about \$170 billion a year invested by Canadians in foreign countries. Many of us will understand this a little better if we go to our mutual funds where up to 20% of your mutual funds can be foreign investments.

In the limited time I have today, I want to point out how I believe that Canada, through these negotiations, has taken a stand that represents Canadians. I think we're doing exactly what this resolution would call for, except that we're not walking away from the table being isolationists and not being part of any kind of world trade. You can't solve these kinds of problems if you aren't at the table.

I have here the Third Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade and First Report of the Sub-Committee on International Trade, Trade Disputes and Investment, an 80-page report that indicates to me very clearly that the federal government, in being at the table and in negotiating this MAI, is keeping the interests of Canadians at heart in some of the areas that have been mentioned in this debate today. Because time is limited, I will keep my remarks relatively brief and read only from the list of recommendations. As part of this report, there are some 17 recommendations.

The first recommendation is:

"Recognizing the importance of better multilateral rules for the security of Canadian inward and outward investment, Canada should continue to participate actively in the MAI negotiations with its OECD partners. Canada should become a contracting partner to the MAI subject to a final text which fully protects Canadian culture, the environment, labour standards, health, education and social services at the federal and subnational levels."

So there we have it. The very first recommendation says that we will recognize the interests Canada has in all of these areas.

Recommendation number 2:

"The government should continue to increase its efforts to inform Canadians of the merits of negotiating a MAI, while addressing the concerns brought forward by this committee's public hearings."

If these were even considered to be ranked in order, and it doesn't indicate that they are, the second recommendation is that these concerns are being aired at public hearings.

I skip down to recommendation number 5:

"In future negotiations regarding matters of as wide-spread importance as the MAI, the government should undertake an open and transparent process so that public disclosure and consultations can be carried out in a timely manner, to the extent that is strategically possible."

I would think there are even some agreements that have been negotiated by governments past that may have initially not been totally before the public because of a strategy that was involved, but certainly Minister Marchi has asked very early in his tenure as the trade minister to have these brought forward.

I quote further from this 80-page report. Recommendation number 10, and this issue of expropriation was mentioned by one of the government speakers:

"The key issue of what constitutes an expropriation or a measure having the equivalent effect to expropriation..., or a measure that impairs investment...should be narrowly defined to accord with Canadian and NAFTA practice."

Again, that addresses one of the very issues that's been brought up by several speakers today.

I quote from recommendation number 12:

"Canada should insist on strong references to ILO core labour standards in the text of the agreement — including supporting alternative 2 on page 50 of the English MAI draft text — which will ensure their protection at a level at least as high as that obtained in the NAFTA. Canada

should also require the incorporation of the OECD guidelines for multinational enterprises into the text of agreements."

So labour has been addressed in this as well.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Just because the committee recommended it doesn't mean that Canada has done it.

Mr Crozier: I'm sorry to inform you, because you should have known, Mr Marchi has said he has accepted these recommendations.

Recommendation number 13:

"The concerns of Canadians regarding the maintenance and introduction of effective environmental standards must be addressed through the use of strong and unambiguous language in the text of the agreement — as in alternative 2 on page 50 of the MAI draft text. Nothing in the MAI, apart from the national treatment of non-discrimination provisions, should infringe on the Canadian governments' capacity at all levels to introduce new measures to protect the environment and promote sustainable development."

Recommendation number 14:

"Canada must achieve an adequate and effective cultural exemption in order to sign this agreement. Therefore, Canada should remain part of the coalition of countries supporting the principle of the French approach to exempting culture from the agreement...."

That's France being "the French approach." In fact, France and Canada have been leaders in bringing up these issues that I'm pointing out to you today.

1620

It goes on to say: "...incorporating a broad self-judging exception within the text of the MAI. Canada should aggressively pursue alliances with other OECD member countries in support of this position," and this is with regard to a cultural exemption.

Recommendation number 16:

"In consultation with subnational levels of government" — and I take it that's the international trade name for, in our case, provinces; there may be other subnational levels of government in other countries not necessarily called by that particular word — "Canada must achieve an unbound reservation for health, education and social services."

Recommendation number 17:

"In order to discipline unilateral extraterritorial measures such as the Helms-Burton Act, Canada in cooperation with the European Union and other like-minded countries should continue to insist upon the inclusion in the MAI of the Canadian proposal or a measure of equivalent effect."

In other words, we don't like the Helms-Burton Act that the United States has passed unilaterally and therefore they should not, nor should any other country, be able to do what Helms-Burton has tried to do to Canada through a unilateral act.

In going over these recommendations — and that's only part of them — any of us in this Legislature should know that if you're going to negotiate fairly and honestly, you have to put it all on the table. You may not like what's on the table. That's the whole idea behind negotiation. Unlike the social contract, where you had no choice — I mean, it

took away collective bargaining rights — true negotiation is putting it on the table, talking about it with those you disagree with, and in the end, if you don't agree with the final text, then is the time to decide not to do it. The time to decide not to negotiate, to me, is not when you're partway through the negotiation, but you stay to the end and get on the table what you want. Thank God this is one process where there is the opportunity to do that. Some overriding organization didn't just come along and say, "Sorry, we've already had an agreement on this and we're going to take away your rights."

We have the right to negotiate internationally. I think Canada is taking that right. Canada has on the table its objections in those areas where those rights of Canadians and in each of the individual provinces can be discussed and protected.

In view of the fact that this now has been set aside for six months — it's not even being discussed for the next six months — as I said at the outset, I would have much preferred to be discussing today the issues of the day that are of so much concern to so many Ontarians; that is health care, education and the protection of kids.

Thank you very much, Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to address this resolution.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I appreciate the opportunity to put a few thoughts on the record today about this very important issue, because it is not only a federal issue but a provincial issue and a community issue. Each person who calls himself a Canadian who wants to participate in a positive and creative way in the community in which he lives is going to be affected very directly and meaningfully if we don't take a look at this for what it is.

Paul Valery is one to say, "The best way to make your dreams come true is to wake up." There are a few people across this country today, Maude Barlow and Tony Clark among them, who have been saying for a number of months now that the people of Canada need to wake up to the threat that the MAI is to the Canadian story, to the Canadian dream.

As Canadians, those who were born here and those who chose to come and live in Canada, we had a dream; we have a dream. But at this moment, given the tenor and the tone of the governments we have in place, that dream is in jeopardy.

In many ways it has been usurped and jettisoned for another dream, a dream that is driven by money, that is driven by the idea of a global economy that has no conscience and no morality, a dream that is not in keeping with the best aspirations of the leaders of this country over a long number of years now, who built the railroad; who built the health care system we all enjoy and appreciate today that is under threat if the MAI, the multilateral agreement on trade and investment, goes through; built an education system that is the best anywhere in the world and that we want to see evolve and build on; built a net of social services for people that made sure there was nobody in this country, however rich or poor, however smart or challenged, who fell through the cracks because any at

particular time they were not able to get a job or participate actively in the community in which they lived.

We have governments in place in Canada now in almost every jurisdiction that have very significantly bought into this global economy, this vision of a global economy that has, as I said, no conscience and no soul.

We know that in the 1960s and 1970s in this country many people, of different political persuasions, worked very hard collectively to put in place pension plans, health care systems, education systems, that would serve the people of this great country and of this province. We knew when we did that that they would have to be paid for, that they would be costly, but we were willing to pay that price because we knew that if we invested in that way, in the communal good of everybody, at the end of the day we would all be better served and we would have an economy that was stable and that would generate a confidence that would attract other people to come and invest in our jurisdiction.

That dream, that plan, that story, wasn't long down the road when the powers that be, the élites in our country and outside the country, began to look at it with some concern because it wasn't in keeping with the fundamentals of the system that they saw would be more in their interests. So they began to change it. The way they began to change it was to squeeze the money out of it that was needed to make it healthy, to have it evolve, to make it grow.

They planted the seed of scepticism. They planted the seed of envy, of jealousy. Governments began to look at ways to get out of this system we collectively had put ourselves in. We saw that with the Mulroney government in the early 1980s, the way it changed the tax system so that less and less of the costs of these programs that were so very important to all the people who called Canada home were paid for by those who actually had the money, the corporations and the well-off in the country. They put that burden in various and devious ways on the back of the middle-class worker to the point where the middle-class worker began to strain and creak under the pressure, under the weight of all that.

We entered into the North American free trade agreement which they thought would enhance the ability of the élites to take us away from this dream, this vision, that we had of our country and more towards a more competitive market-driven vision of where we might go, which they felt in fact was in our best interests.

It was interesting. We had a Liberal government that when in opposition at the federal level saw all this, was very critical and said that, given an opportunity to be government, it would change it, it would make it different, it would go back to where we were when people like Pierre Trudeau, for example, under the influence of Tommy Douglas, were building programs and having a system of very generous and compassionate systems in place to actually help people.

1630

We elected a Liberal government at the federal level and they weren't long there when they began to backtrack. I remember Jean Chrétien going to Washington soon after

he was elected. He went down and said he was going to walk out of the American free trade agreement. He was going to walk away, as he said he would do in the campaign to be elected in that year. Did he do that? No, he didn't, because he was convinced, he was persuaded by the powers that be in Washington, who are influenced by other powers in other places, that in fact this is where we should be going. So the Liberal government that we thought was going to be different bought into the deficit-cutting and dollar-focused agenda that places people second, third, fourth or fifth down the road.

This multilateral agreement on investment that we're looking at now, that Maude Barlow and Tony Clark and so many others have raised a red flag about, would cast in stone all those movements by those governments so that we could never again participate collectively in the development of the dream that we saw evolve in this country in the 1960s and the 1970s.

Let's take it a little closer to home for a minute, the vision of the Mike Harris Tories in Ontario, and ask ourselves what it is that they are doing which feels so much like what Brian Mulroney did in the early 1980s at the federal level, and that I suspect, given a chance to be government, the provincial Liberals will in fact endorse. Because up to now what we hear as their leader goes out to speak to the people of Ontario about what they would do, given a chance to govern in Ontario, is that they would take the surpluses generated by the program that the provincial Tories have put in place and then reinvest them in the programs that we all know are so important to the communities and people of Ontario. In other words, they will buy into the program that Mike Harris has imposed on Ontario.

Let's just look for a minute at what that program is and what it's about. We must also understand that:

"Mike Harris is a mere spear carrier in a globalized world of pecuniary values, a loyal and unreflective soldier doing the bidding of transnational capital. Similarly, the federal Liberals appear to have jettisoned their defence of the average citizen in their rabid embrace of the market economy. Both have succumbed to the overriding idea: We are no longer a culture but part of a broader economy. So to counter this surrender the average citizen must be aware of exactly what is happening and do what they can to be critical thinkers, because the great fight is upon us.

"Once again (the first was the Industrial Revolution) a deadly serious attempt is being made to cram the sacramental nature of human life, the holiness of humanity, the God-given dignity of our vulnerable children and the earth itself into the law of the market. World capitalist development, accelerated by computer-based technology in the midst of a new international production system, has resulted in too many workers chasing too few jobs.

"The result we see: in the free market countries the gap between the rich and the poor becoming greater; a depression of wages for working people which results in longer hours to pay the bills and stay even, which results in less time to reflect and analyse this disturbing trend; an assault on the integrity and importance of the family,

scattered and driven apart by these market forces, working split shifts, strange hours and never breaking bread together.

"This increased mobility, epidemic in today's volatile labour market, weakens the relationship with the people who socialized us.

"With the powerful, persuasive tools of mass marketing, it overwhelms and empties sacred symbols of their power and encourages the young to adopt a prefabricated identity where material goods become visible symbols of their inner worth. In general, we see a loosening of the bonds of the human community, a decrease in the solidarity we owe each other, a heightening of individualism and defensive vulnerability where each feels he must solely defend his own territory in Darwinist fashion. The Africans have a saying which describes this new reality: 'In times of drought, the animals around the watering hole begin to look at each other'" differently.

"When the only reality that is recognized as ultimate is market forces, then the human person, the worker creating the wealth becomes merely a commodity, a disposable unit of production. If, as the market states, societies are only 'statistical aggregations of individuals engaged in voluntary exchange,' if as Margaret Thatcher insisted there are only individuals, isolated units in love with 'the unrestrained freedom to maximize their own advantage,' if there is only a Darwinian jungle of self-interested individuals disconnected from any moral organic" truth, "if the only hand we acknowledge is the unseen hidden hand of the market which declares right now that over 1.5 million Canadians are expendable rather than the hand of community, solidarity and compassion, then we must agree with the Czech playwright and former president Vaclav Havel who declared, 'The narrative is broken.'"

These are a few thoughts that were shared with us last week in Sault Ste Marie by my good friend Ted Schmidt, who has written in *Catholic New Times* on many occasions about the marketplace and what it's doing to people and to communities.

I say to you this afternoon that there are millions of stories across this land and across this province that speak of this reality, and none more real than those who are told about the small communities in Ontario and in particular northern Ontario. I would suggest that people who want to know more about the impact of this global economy on small communities in northern Ontario might want to take a look at *High Grader Magazine*, which is put out by a couple in Cobalt to tell those stories.

It's my fear this afternoon that if this multilateral agreement on trade is allowed to go forward, those stories will die, and with them the communities and the people who inhabit them.

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to participate in this debate this afternoon, this important debate on the proposed multilateral agreement on investment.

The federal government of course, as we know, has lead responsibility on this issue and is responsible for negotiating it with the member countries of the Organiza-

tion for Economic Co-operation and Development or, as we call it, the OECD. However, the Ontario government insists on being consulted on this matter and on having an organized and effective way of making our own voice heard.

I listened to my esteemed colleague and friend the member for Scarborough-Ellesmere and parliamentary assistant to the Premier as she delved into the details of the proposed MAI, but I want to reiterate that although the Ontario government would be supportive of an investment treaty in principle, we will not commit to formally supporting the agreement unless certain basic conditions are met.

An agreement must provide meaningful commercial benefits for Canadians who make investments in other countries. We must ensure that the investor-state dispute settlement provisions provide an adequate means of redress for investors. We also insist on giving the Ontario government the latitude it needs to respond to our own regulatory needs. Ontario must retain its ability to enforce existing environmental standards and indeed to strengthen them over time without being exposed to claims for compensation by affected parties. We don't want to see other countries which sign an investment treaty, whether it be the proposed MAI or some other agreement, able to lower their own environmental standards to attract foreign investment, for we know that environmental problems know no borders.

I want to spend a few minutes speaking about the Ontario economy and what this government is doing to help make it even stronger. Now that I've set out the Ontario government's position with regard to the MAI, I wish to move into a broader subject: the importance of international trade to Ontario's economy.

Make no mistake about it, this government places a very high priority on Ontario's international trading arrangements. I want to take a few minutes to describe just how vital international trade is to Ontario's economy. Our economic growth, our job creation and our future economic prosperity all depend on how successfully Ontario companies, their management and their workforce working in concert, take advantage of international trade and investment opportunities.

1640

The Ontario government is committed to helping companies in this province discover and develop new export opportunities. We have every reason to do this. This province has one of the world's most open economies. Last year, the value of foreign exports of goods and services represented the equivalent of 40% of the value of all of Ontario's economic activity. As an exporting jurisdiction, Ontario has had some very good results over the years. But in the era of tight international competition we live in today, "very good" won't be good enough in the future. We simply will have to be better than our economic competitors over time.

In 1997 almost 90% of our exports went to the United States, and they were highly concentrated in a very few sectors, such as the automotive industry. We need to be

looking for ways to expand the range of goods and services we sell internationally and to diversify the markets we sell to. Let me give you an example.

Ontario's exports account for about 2% of all the global exports in the world. But if you exclude the United States from this factor, we account for only one quarter of one percent of the global export markets. Of course, it's in our best interests to maintain and even build up our very strong foothold in the American market, but we also have a profound need to diversify our markets around the world.

That's one of the reasons why last December the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism announced the creation of a new export marketing task force to help improve Ontario's international trade potential. Reporting to the minister, the task force was comprised of 27 senior executives from leading Ontario companies, large and small. It was co-chaired by David Winfield, senior vice-president of government relations for Northern Telecom, and Len Crispino, president of the Ontario International Trade Corp. As well, the OITC chair, my friend the member for Eglinton, led a number of subcommittees and held consultations with the public and private sector representatives throughout the work of this task force.

The task force held its inaugural meeting in January and wrapped up its proceedings in the first week of April. Clearly, it had an aggressive and demanding agenda. The task force's mission was to determine how to increase Ontario's share of the global export market; enhance the awareness of Ontario as a source of high-quality, internationally competitive goods and services; and build, foster and maintain a trading culture in Ontario. The task force completed its report, and that is now being reviewed by the Minister of Economic Development. We expect that the report will help to provide the basis for a new export development strategy, which the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism will submit to cabinet and the government caucus in due time.

The Ontario government is entirely committed to helping to make this province the best place in the world to live, to work and to raise a family — and to do business. The government's pro-growth agenda is clearly reaping rewards. Ontario's economy hasn't looked this strong in many years. Investment is up; exports are up; housing starts are up; inflation is below 2%; and consumer and business confidence are way up.

Ontario's GDP growth is the highest in Canada, and leads all the G-7 countries. In 1997, the Ontario economy registered its strongest growth of the decade, with real GDP rising some 4.8%. Private sector forecasters expect Ontario's GDP growth rate to continue to outpace the growth projected for any of the G-7 countries.

Ontario's job market is booming. Since January 1997, employment in Ontario has risen by 263,000 jobs. Since our government took office in mid-1995, 350,000 net new jobs have been created in Ontario. That's half of all the new jobs created in Canada in the same time period.

In March, Ontario's unemployment rate fell to 7.4%, the lowest in almost a decade. Ontario is once again becoming the province of hope and opportunity, the driver of Canada's economy. As we near the 21st century, Ontario is poised to succeed as business hubs, magnets for investment, an exporting economy and first-rate tourism destinations.

Mr Patten: I am very pleased today to spend some time sharing some thoughts and my beliefs concerning the multilateral agreement on investment, euphemistically called the MAI.

I would first like to address the resolution this afternoon. I find it somewhat confusing, but I will give you what I believe to be the spirit of it. If that's acceptable, then I would be in support of the resolution.

The resolution calls for an immediate halt on current negotiations. Well, in fact there is at the moment a halt on negotiations. I think what the meat of the resolution attempts to address is really that the government of Canada and presumably the government of Ontario would refuse to be part of an agreement that would enshrine the rights of corporate investors over the rights of the people of Canada. I interpret that to be the spirit of the resolution, and on that basis I am in support of the resolution.

I believe we're all concerned. Throughout Canada all levels of government should be concerned, absolutely concerned. I know many of my colleagues in the federal Parliament are concerned about this as well. I have had phone calls at my riding office indicating concern about it.

I would like to proceed on the basis of the sovereignty of Canada versus the sovereignty of multinational enterprises or multinational corporations, whatever the term is. I will stand firm, and I believe our Canadian government will stand firm, to fight any attempt to propose any such arrangement that would want Canada to be part of this.

A little earlier my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt, as did a number of members in the House this afternoon, pointed out how important the export market is for Canada. But he pointed out something that I believe is an important aspect: our high dependence upon exports to one country. As great as that is and as happy as we are to have people buying our products, anyone in business will know, or perhaps more specifically if they're a private consultant, and they only have one very large one that represents 80% of their work and one other that represents 20%, more than likely that consultant is going to attempt to diversify the work or the services they do. I believe it's in Canada's interest — it certainly is in Ontario's interest — to look at how we can diversify our exports.

As has been pointed out by members, our exports have been up in Ontario. They are up in Canada. That is a good sign. But the importance of diversification is also a good sign. The opportunities for diversification of course are throughout the world: in Europe, the Pacific Rim and elsewhere.

I would also suggest that in terms of foreign investment in Canada — and we're talking about a two-way street here — we have some kind of final agreement that will enable investments and we have more and more

investments from Canada to other countries taking place, from which Canadians and Ontarians benefit.

I'm advised that as a rule of thumb, \$1 million of investment is worth about 45,000 jobs. When I look at Canada today, let alone Ontario, we have a high level of unemployment, certainly unacceptable; other provinces have far higher unemployment. This is unacceptable. We know that foreign investment here is an important element of job creation.

1650

It was mentioned by my colleague from Essex South that one of my constituents — I've known Maude Barlow on a personal basis for many years, a person who is obviously a fighter and a person who will stand up for her principles as the chairwoman of the Council of Canadians. I'd just like to reiterate, though, that in the last period of time, prior to the halt of negotiations just recently, Maude Barlow said, "I have to say that Canada did hold firmer than I thought they would."

Some of you know she will take on the Canadian government and berate it, day in and day out, against what she believes might happen. But so far, at this particular stage, she's saying:

"What Marchi clearly said was that he was annoyed with the OECD for not communicating better with the people whom the deal will affect.

"I think Canada took one of the strongest stands," Ms Barlow said."

I applaud my constituent and my friend Maude Barlow for standing up for Canadians, as I think everyone would want her to do.

Are we talking about one extreme or the other? Are we saying no, we don't want any foreign investment? I don't hear anyone saying that. Are we saying we only want foreign investment, at all costs? Perhaps there are some who would say that, but certainly I wouldn't and I don't think any members of any party here would say that. We're really talking about a balance.

We also are well enough aware that Canada, as a relatively small economy, especially next to the giant in the States and many other giants around the world economically — we have a fairly good and strong economy and a fair-sized economy for the size of our population, but relatively we are a small economy, and we have a very vast piece of property. Our geography in Canada is vast, the second-largest country in the world, with a relatively small population given the size of our country.

It's extremely important how we manage our cultural affairs, how we support cultural activity and the cultural industries that are Canadian, especially living so close to the United States, where they have a completely different view of culture because they're so big. It's a major industry for them around the world, so they don't worry about the concerns about culture. They worry about not having other countries accept their industries. They are often very insensitive, in my opinion, to the fact that they completely dominate smaller countries, at least with smaller populations. They are unaware of it and what

damage that may do to the strength and the diversity of cultures around the world, really.

I would like to take a few minutes and refer to a document that my colleague from Essex South referred to, but I want to put it in a context: the First Report of the Subcommittee on International Trade, Trade Disputes and Investment. It's a fair-sized document. Depending on how fast you can read, you could probably get through it in an hour or an hour and a half or so.

How did this document come about? The first thing that's important is that the document came about by a letter from the Minister for International Trade, the Honourable Sergio Marchi, to the chair of a standing committee, requesting parliamentary input into negotiations leading to any proposed multilateral agreement on investment. The members of the House know full well that there are customs in the ways things take place. This is unusual. It's unusual for a minister, first of all, to submit something to a standing committee before work is done on things. But no, the minister asked and said, "Listen, we want this to go before the members of the House, through this committee, and we would like to have hearings and invite people who have a concern, who have an interest in this."

I identify this because I know it's part of the resolution. It suggests that negotiations by the federal government took place for years in secrecy, and I would like to suggest that indeed there are many ways in which this information is out there. Members of the House will know, when you have a special interest, how disappointed you often become when you find that nobody else seems to care, when there is something that, individually, we believe is really important and no journalists are writing about it, there's nothing on television, nobody's talking about it on the talk shows, or anything of that nature. Then all of a sudden, somebody finds that word that resonates. People gravitate to it and reports are written, articles are written about it. I think this is somewhat similar.

I know for a fact that the federal government approached the Globe and Mail and said, "We'd like to tell you about these negotiations and discussions we're having with the OECD about some rules and regulations on foreign investment." There was nothing that came by way of the Globe and Mail, I understand, at that particular time. Of course, now there is; there's greater interest. But I'm led to believe that the judgement was, "Who cares about this really?" and "Who has a great interest?" So who knows, there may be more articles being written as this issue is raised.

My colleague from Essex South pointed out a few examples of what this committee did. They had hearings, they had numerous submissions and they wrote the final report. Some of the people that went before them were from one end of the spectrum, from the Fraser Institute to the Canadian Film and Television Production Association, to Laval University, to the Sierra Club, to Concordia University, the University of Toronto, Citizens Concerned about Free Trade, individuals, Citizens for Public Justice,

etc, just to give you a flavour of some of the people that made representations.

I went through this report — it looks to me to have a couple of hundred submissions from individuals over and above the hearing process — and I thought that the proposed resolutions from this committee were quite good. What did they have to say?

As my colleague from Essex South said, they recommended that Canada, on the cultural issue, adopt the position of the French government, which has grave concerns about the implications to culture. They went on to 17 different resolutions in the report, and in each of the concerns they addressed that were indicated through their hearings, the wording of the results Canada's negotiating team should achieve regarding the protection of core labour standards, the environment, public services, culture and the policies of provincial and municipal governments has to be taken into account as part of the end result. A strongly worded final recommendation is made to discipline the undertaking of extraterritorial measures such as the Helms-Burton Act. That's extraterritorial, the Helms-Burton Act, which we know full well in this particular country.

What happened with that recommendation? There was a response from the government by way of the Minister of International Trade. I would like to read a short passage on that in a moment, because I think it lays out for the people of Canada, the people of Ontario and this Legislature a fairly unequivocal statement, the government's commitment to continued extensive information that will be provided to members of Parliament, the opposition critics, the provinces and any one else who should be listed, and they go on to identify a Web site. I won't go into providing it at the moment because it will take too long. It's a commitment that the people of Canada participate in this process; also the information and the ongoing information that has been continual with all the provinces in this particular process.

1700

I would like to quote the Honourable Sergio Marchi's statement in response to this report. He says:

"The government believes that Canada cannot afford to hide from the global economy and the rest of the world," — I think we would probably agree with that — "but must work to try to shape the future to our advantage. We are quite prepared to take the time to get it done right. If our requirements are not met, we will not sign any MAI and we will still continue to attract investment to Canada. As I have said before, the government will only accept the right deal at the right time. For this government, Canada's interests and values must always be — and always will be — paramount."

Earlier in the letter, he identifies the major concerns that seem to be the worry of a lot of people, and that will take place.

I suppose our job, certainly in opposition and the responsibility of any member, is to make sure that, whatever happens, our government, the Ontario government, participates fully, shares its views, as the Canadian

government is doing. I must also reiterate for the benefit of my colleagues that the Canadian government itself has put on the table 50 concerns, all of which identify the issues that have been raised so far today in this House.

If my interpretation of the resolution is indeed the intended spirit as proposed, then I for one will certainly be standing in my place to support the resolution and assure you that in any way possible that I can help my colleagues to appreciate the ongoing concerns of constituents and the people of Ontario, I shall be proud and happy to do so, and I know that I would receive a very welcome reception.

Mr Wildman: I am pleased to be able to participate in this debate on a matter which I think is overarching and is of importance to all of us who are interested not only in international trade and those kinds of arrangements but in our own social and economic patterns here in this province. All of us who are in favour of the protection of social services, education and health care must be interested in the multilateral agreement on investment which is being proposed at the international level.

Some members have participated in the debate, saying they are in favour of international trade. Well, all of us, obviously, in living in a country like Canada, are interested in international trade. It is a very important part of our economy. Nobody is suggesting that we should somehow try to end our role as a trading nation. This would be ridiculous in a place like Canada. But we are saying that for investment in this country, whether it's the federal government or the provincial governments, this country must be able to set the rules for how corporations can act when they invest in this jurisdiction. That's what we're talking about.

Some have said, "We must be at the table," and have justified the role of Mr Marchi in the fact that he is just trying to defend Canadian interests at the table. I hope he is trying to do that, but I want to point out that Canada isn't just at the table; Canada is leading in this process. The Honourable Donald Johnston is the chair of the OECD. The OECD countries were lobbied by the Prime Minister of Canada to get him there.

We also see the role of the Prime Minister of Canada and his colleagues in the expansion of the North American free trade agreement now to try to include all of the Americas. This is a government that has flip-flopped in its position with regard to international trade matters and is now leading the parade for the relaxation of any barriers or what are perceived to be barriers to international trade.

It has been suggested that the resolution proposes an immediate halt to negotiations, and that has happened and therefore we should be happy, but the fact is that we have an interim six-month moratorium on negotiations. The negotiations have not been halted.

The rest of the resolution not only calls for a halt to the negotiations but frankly suggests that we should withdraw from the field. For those reasons, I support the resolution.

I regret the fact that Canada is one of the leading countries in the international community currently finalizing the negotiations, because that's what's being proposed. This moratorium has been described as a pit stop

on the way to an agreement; it's not an end to the negotiations.

The reason I'm so concerned is that I believe this to be an unprecedented threat to Canada's democratic system and sovereignty as an independent nation. It's ironic that we have members of the American Congress now raising concerns about the protection of American sovereignty and suggesting that this agreement should not proceed because they do not want to find themselves, as Americans, in a situation where they cannot set the rules for how business will be conducted in their own jurisdiction.

The MAI, if it is signed, will make it very difficult for governments to have room to make laws and regulations to protect Canadian workers, the Canadian economy, the environment in this country, Canadian culture, and indeed to protect Canadian independence. Frankly, I believe they will be all but eliminated.

Under the MAI proposal, large multinational corporations could take court action against any government that took any action perceived by corporations to limit investments by foreigners in this country. Environmental standards, occupational health and safety regulations, minimum wage levels and the health and education systems in Canada and in Ontario would become subject to legal action by foreign investors. Even municipal official plans and bylaws could be subject to action by foreign corporations if they believed these provisions might adversely affect their investment opportunities. Even municipal bylaws and planning would be affected.

I believe the MAI is an unprecedented attack on the rights of a democratically elected federal, provincial or municipal government to act on behalf of its citizens and interests. That's why I believe the MAI must be stopped, because I'm afraid that Canadian governments might well just hand over the keys to our country to international corporations and banking institutions. We cannot allow the sovereignty to make rules and regulations in our country to be eliminated or to be even limited by agreements that protect banking and international corporations' activities against the interests of the individual host country.

I believe that the decision to put the negotiations on hold for six months does not mean, unfortunately, that the MAI is dead. Frankly, I believe that all Canadians and certainly all Ontarians, and all members of this assembly, must join in pressing the federal government to withdraw from these negotiations and to ensure that we protect our sovereignty and independence as a national state so that we can set our own regulations and enter into whatever bilateral or multilateral agreements we choose and not be bound by an agreement that sets what we can or cannot do for the next 20 years.

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): I'm pleased to enter into the debate today. I think there are a couple of issues that we need to hear all sides on.

I'd first like to say that we're very lucky today to have the John P. Robarts Research Institute in the building explaining what they do in southwestern Ontario and

throughout the world, if you will, with research for health care and education. So I'd like to comment on that. That brings me into the whole area of where we're going with health, where we're going with our investments, what we're doing in Ontario, Canada and the world.

As everyone knows, the Robarts institute is recognized around the world for the things and the insight it gives us into health and how it helps us develop. What I can't help but stopping and saying today is that Ontario and, after that, Canada are not islands. We can't look at Ontario and say that how we were 50 years ago or 100 years ago is how we need to be today, tomorrow and the next day.

We're in a growing economy that nobody ever thought we were going to be into. My parents, who are 80 years old now, looked at where we would be in 1999 and they saw very different things from what actually happens today. We have to say that Canada, or Ontario, is not an island. We have to be trading. We have to be exporting. We have to be looking to attract investment and to invest in other places in the world so that we stay on the leading edge.

1710

The member for Algoma talks about investment; he talks about things like the banks; he talks about big organizations, that we have some concerns about how they're spending their profits and what they're doing in their economy. What he fails to recognize, and what I think we all need to recognize, is that we probably all invest in some way in the global economy. As small as my husband and I are — we have worked all our lives and had very few dollars — some of our dollars are invested in the international world, if you will, because we have RRSPs. If you look at the teachers' pension plan for all the teachers of the province, they have one of the largest investments, I think we all recognize, and some of those, about 20% in most cases, are invested in the world out there.

We have to recognize that when we're talking about a multilateral agreement on investment, we're not talking about just the banks; we're talking about the investments that you and I are making through our mutual funds, our RRSPs, that we're making in companies we believe are going to grow and prosper. My children have investments, a few dollars their grandparents gave them, in Microsoft, and with that investment in Microsoft, they're making investments in the United States. They're very lucky kids, I admit that — their grandparents are good to them — but on the other side, that is an investment in the future and in the global economy, so we can't be looking at this and saying, "Hey, these are the big bad banks," or "These are the big bad companies across the world." These are investments that you and I and other people are making in the future of Ontario.

No one wants a carte blanche agreement. I think everybody has said here today that what we need to have is a negotiated agreement that's good for Canadians, good for Ontarians. We want to make sure there is commercial benefit for Canadian businesses so they can make their investments in other countries. We want to make sure,

though, when we're looking at those investments and when we're considering what we're doing in our investment world, that we're thinking about the environment. Environmental standards are very important. We all recognize that they need to be strengthened over time, and we need to be careful about the compensation claims, all those kinds of things. We have to be very cognizant that we don't see environmental standards weakened over time.

I spoke last week to the fishing ministry at the federal level, talking about our Great Lakes, and we all recognize that in the past we have negotiated agreements that may have environmental standards, but those environmental standards have to be strengthened, and so we're working towards that at both the federal and provincial levels. No one wants to see those standards become less. We want to see a better Ontario for our children.

This government supports international trade agreements. We understand how vital international trade is to the Ontario economy. The member for Algoma says, "Yes, I understand that exporting is important, I understand trade is." We all understand that it has to be, but if we're not at the table to be able to negotiate that — unfortunately, Ontario isn't at the table; it's the federal government that's at the table — we can't do right for the people of Ontario and Canada, because we have to be there to negotiate.

Our economic growth, job creation and future prosperity depend on international trade and investment opportunities. We want to help our industries to export and develop new opportunities outside this province and outside this country. You have to remember that some of the biggest barriers our businesses have right now are with other provinces within the country of Canada, and we're all saying that we need to move to reduce some of those barriers. Representing a large agricultural area, as I am lucky enough to do, we need very much to have our agricultural product moved outside of the province of Ontario. We need it to be moved into other areas of Canada and throughout the world. What we used to be able to grow on an acre of land was very small compared to what we can grow today, and we need to be able to find new markets, new homes for those products. We need to be able to look at that export market and expand it.

Ontario's exports have increased by 50% over the last three years. In 1997, exports accounted for 44% of Ontario's economic activity. We have to ensure that there is a good climate for export and investment within the province. Exports support job creation, as everyone in this room is aware, especially the members on this side of the House. Part of the Common Sense Revolution was that we would help stimulate the job market so there would be 725,000 people employed within the private sector.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Thank you, Bill Clinton.

Mrs Johns: You may say, "Thank you, Bill Clinton." I say, "Thank you, Mike Harris," because he thought about creating jobs. He thought about opportunities that were out there. He reduced red tape. He moved forward to make

sure there was the opportunity when markets expanded to be able to have jobs being created within this province.

As an exporting jurisdiction, Ontario has performed well, but we all know we're going to have to do better and better and better. I don't think anyone here is saying that we can ever think to go back, but we have to be at the table to make sure this agreement allows us every opportunity to create an environment for us to do better and better.

Someone said earlier today that there is \$170 billion in investment that we invest in other areas of the world. There's \$180 billion in investment that comes into Canada. We need to have that flow of dollars, both coming in and going out of Canada.

We have a dominant customer. I now work in energy and everybody knows that we talk about a dominant market position right now with Ontario Hydro. In the export business we also have a dominant customer. Some 90% of our exports go to the United States, 3% go to Asia and 1% to Latin America. We have to expand that. We don't want to have one dominant customer. We don't want to be always having to say, "Thank you, Bill Clinton." We don't want to say thank you to any one player, just as in our own businesses and our own investments. I don't buy groceries from one store, I buy them from a couple of stores. I'm sure everybody is saying the same thing: not a dominant customer. We need to have more people we are trading with. We need to diversify.

We see ourselves talking about that not only in investments, as we're talking about here today, but we need to diversify in the products we make and build in this province. We need to diversify so that we're not exporting all our natural resources. We need to diversify in 101 ways so that we create jobs and opportunities for the people of Ontario. As diversification becomes an increasingly important part of the global economy, we need more companies exporting goods to a more global share of the market.

In March, Ontario's auto production rose 14% from a year ago to reach a record monthly level of 247,000 units. Ontario's automotive industry is emerging. Recently Westcast Industries, which is a good company in my riding, announced the creation of a new foundry which by 2000-01 will create 300 new jobs to meet the growing demand of the automobile industry. We need to have investment coming into Canada and investment moving out of Canada that allows us to create those jobs and stimulate the marketplace.

As I said earlier, I represent an agrifood county, if you will. Ontario's agrifood industry has also built a world-wide reputation based on the quality of its agrifood exports. Ontario's agrifood exports increased by \$300,000 in 1997 compared with 1996. Between 1988 and 1997, exports have almost tripled in the agrifood industry, and that's very important for my community. We need to keep those investments flowing in and flowing out so that we're able to have the agrifood industry growing. They create jobs in my community, the agrifood industry does, and we need to have that industry growing and prospering.

1720

Areas where Ontario could expand exports in the coming years would include science and technology, telecommunications and health technology, transportation, education and resource management. But we cannot say these are all ours, we won't share these. We have to make sure that as people invest in these areas, they do so in a way that's good for the people of Ontario and the people of Canada.

We, as a province, should be able to position our industries to diversify to meet the demanding needs of other industrial and non-industrial nations. These opportunities should be good for us as well as developing nations.

This government has planned several trade missions since taking office to various sectors around the world to enhance Ontario's profile and to help open up new export markets. The Ontario government is committed to creating a more export-oriented culture in this province. We have a Team Canada trade mission where we ask people who are travelling all the time to help us, to talk about the good things that happen in Ontario and Canada. We have Trade Winds Forum Ontario organized to do business in Latin America. Ontario's lead trade agency, which we heard about earlier, is the OITC, which strives to help Ontario be known in the marketplace. We also have the Canada Ontario Export Forum. We're creating a Web site with information about our economy and the business climate that we have in Ontario to create investment. We have enhanced the ministry publication *Challenges* so that people are cognizant about what Ontario has to offer.

If people in this place today are thinking that as a result of opening up a multilateral agreement on investment in some way Canada, if it negotiates the proper agreement, will be damaged by it, I say bunk. I say that if we give Canadians and Ontarians the same opportunity as we give other people within the world, we will do very well. We will create jobs and we will protect the things that we believe are important to protect, which include environment, health care, transportation and education to ensure that there are opportunities for our people, because we can compete, we can do well if we let Ontarians and Canadians become competitors head on with other people across the world.

Not only is the government building Ontario's export base through the things I've already mentioned before, but we're strengthening our economy at home to entice investment in Ontario. All of these initiatives are working, and the numbers are the proof that these initiatives are working.

Ontario's economy recorded the strongest growth of the decade, the real GDP rising 4.8%. This rise in output was broad based, with the household, business and export sectors all contributing to the growth.

Part of the reason for that great growth is of course as a result of the policies developed to get rid of red tape, to work forward to allow businesses to come here and for us to invest in other areas.

The private sector is more optimistic that the Ontario economy will still remain strong in 1998. All private sector forecasters expect Ontario to grow faster than the Canadian average in 1998, 1999 and 2000.

The chief economist of Nesbitt Burns, Dr Sherry Cooper, said: "The Ontario economy is booming. The tax cuts are clearly working their way through the system."

The International Monetary Fund has forecast that Canada will lead all industrialized nations in economic growth, with real output rising 3.8% in 1997 and 3.5% in 1998. That's very exciting news for us in a country that's growing, and we see the monetary system thriving. It is very important for us.

From February 1997 to February 1998, the private sector has created 265,000 net new jobs in Ontario, the best 12-month gain ever in Ontario. When you think about that, that's incredible: the best 12-month gain ever in the province of Ontario, 265,000 net new jobs.

In March 1998, Ontario's total employment rose 3,300, following a 35,000-job gain in February. When you think about that, the unemployment rate will continue to decline, falling to 7.4% in March. That's very exciting news, and this is not happening because we're isolationist. It's not happening because we're not diversifying. It's not happening because we're not trying to stimulate and create growth in Ontario and in Canada. We need to continue to do all of those things and, to do that, we have to be at the table, negotiating what is best of Canadians and Ontarians.

The Ontario help wanted index rose sharply, by 2.9%, in March. The help wanted index in Ontario is at its highest level since September 1990. So we know that this province is booming, it's moving forward and it's working.

From June 1995 to March 1998, the number of people depending on social assistance has declined by over a quarter of a million people. That's a drop of 18.9%. In a good economy, your people are working. What we need to do is ensure that there are jobs for these people to go to. I often heard when I first came to this House that there were no jobs for people to go to. As the Ontario help wanted index increases, that shows there are jobs for people to be able to move to. From June 1995 to March 1998, the number of people coming off social assistance increased substantially.

According to Statistics Canada's recent investment intentions survey, Ontario's business plan is to raise plant and equipment spending by 2.5% in 1998. This follows a robust 13.8% in 1997. So people with small businesses, like the ones we might know of, friends or neighbours, are starting to look at starting their own business, investing in plant and equipment so that they too can have the opportunity to run their own business and create jobs. All of those investments are an important part, and whether they come from Canadians, from Ontarians or from outside Ontario and Canada, what that does is, it allows Ontarians to work. It's very important to have those investments.

What we have in Ontario right now is an economy that's booming. We have people who are able to work. We have business building permits which are rising by 63.4% from a year ago, and we all know that business permits and construction are a leading indicator of where the economy is going in the future. We know that as building permits are being taken out, we're going to have a stimulation of jobs again.

To say that we should be away from the table, to say that we should live in isolation and we shouldn't be concerned about these multilateral agreements in investment is not the right approach. We have to be at the table and we have to protect what we believe is important for the environment, what we believe is important for health care, what we believe is important for our social programs.

Mr Bradley: When I first heard about this debate, I thought it was MRI we were talking about, magnetic resonance imager, because we in the Niagara region need a number of magnetic resonance imagers and right now there is a breakthrough health care campaign under the auspices of the St Catharines General Hospital Foundation which is raising money because, as we all know, the government does not contribute a penny to the magnetic resonance imager capital cost, and even the operating cost is far from adequately covered.

1730

I thought when this motion was brought forward, because we're sitting in the Ontario Legislature, a provincial Parliament, that we'd be talking about the MRI, magnetic resonance imager. Certainly we're going to have one in St Catharines. We would like to have one in Welland and one in Niagara Falls. We need a number of these to serve the good people of the Niagara Peninsula. If we are speaking in favour of the MRI, the magnetic resonance imager, I am fine.

Interjections.

Mr Bradley: The members opposite are pointing out deficiencies in my tie and my collar, I see.

I tried to figure out why the NDP would be bringing forward this motion in the provincial Parliament. This should be debated very extensively in the federal Parliament, no question about it. That is an important issue. Then I thought, "It fits in with the strategy now," which is that you aim the guns at the federal Liberals and if you use the word "Liberal" enough they'll think that it's the provincial Liberals.

Mr Marchese: More or less.

Mr Bradley: My friend from Fort York confirms that that is the case.

Lest you think I'm picking on the NDP, I asked them first if it was all right if I explained to the folks out there what the strategy was in bringing this resolution forward. They would want to try to have provincial Liberals accept some of the blame for federal Liberals, even though I say nothing about — for instance, when someone mentions Bingogate in BC, I say, "That has nothing to do with the New Democrats in Ontario." NDP Premier Glen Clark said something rather negative about Greenpeace. He said

they were the enemies of the people of British Columbia, so there's almost a bounty now in the rural areas of British Columbia, because the NDP Premier of British Columbia said Greenpeace was an enemy of British Columbia. I don't blame that on my friend Howard Hampton. I don't blame that on the New Democrats here, because I know they're not going to blame what other provinces or the federal government do on provincial Liberals. I know that.

When the NDP government closed hospitals in Saskatchewan, I said, "That has nothing to do with the provincial New Democrats here in Ontario." And when they cut taxes in their budgets, I don't say, "That's the same as the Ontario New Democrats."

I think people have to know that when we're in these various jurisdictions, the Ontario New Democrats are entirely different. You cannot hold them responsible for the federal New Democrats or New Democrats in any other province, just as I can't hold the Conservatives here responsible for Brian Mulroney. I have never in this House suggested that they are associated in any way with Brian Mulroney and that former discredited government. I would not say that about this particular group here.

We're going to talk about the resolution, but I wanted to mention the MRI first of all, because of the great need. I also wanted to let the folks out there know what the strategy is, because sometimes they don't follow the House carefully enough to know what the strategy is in each of these cases.

If you word the motion in a tricky manner, you leave people with a couple of choices. For instance, it condemns the federal government. If you vote for it they say you're condemning the federal government, if you vote against it you're in bed with the federal government, so it's a no-win situation that my friends in the New Democratic Party have suggested.

Mr Marchese: So don't vote.

Mr Bradley: The member for Fort York says from the floor, not from his seat, "Well, don't vote." I remember that happening in the House last Thursday morning. I was looking for New Democrats when we talked about tax cuts and they were all gone. They had vanished. They were Casper the ghost or something like that.

I want to say that I'm going to support this motion. I'm going to support the motion because I think that in all of these international agreements, particularly those which affect trade and those that could affect our culture, our environment, our health care and so on, we have to proceed with extreme caution. The member for Sault Ste Marie agrees with me when I say that.

Maude Barlow has been very much involved in this and I want to compliment Maude for doing this: for initiating in the greater public context a debate on this potential agreement. She is doing a good job in that. I want to compliment her. I may not agree with absolutely everything Maude says about things, but she has raised a number of significant issues that I think the public at large want to know about. They want a thorough debate in the federal Parliament, and there should be forums across this

country where this is debated, even though this particular item probably best belongs in the federal Parliament.

I had to listen to some of my colleagues. I'm always interested in what my colleagues opposite have to say. The member for Huron went on at great length about the Ontario economy and she recognized, I'm sure, that Bill Clinton is to be thanked. I will personally get a thank you card that she can send to Bill Clinton, because that old US economy is booming. The government members, when you say, "What about British Columbia?" have to remember that the greatest provincial trading partner with the United States is Ontario. In fact, if you were to look at a chart, it would show that the number one trading partner with the United States is Canada. Do you know what the second-largest trading partner is, if it were a separate entity? The province of Ontario.

When that US economy is booming, I'll tell you, our economy is going to boom. When Bill Clinton and his organization over there lower interest rates, stimulate the economy of the United States, it's booming.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Nepean, come to order.

Mr Bradley: Our exports are just heading into the US, so we have lower interest rates now, which we didn't have under the Mulroney government. I'm sorry, I wasn't supposed to mention Brian Mulroney. We did not have low interest rates under the Mulroney government. I will not blame you for that, but right now we have low interest rates and a low dollar. The dollar is at a very competitive rate. I remember being in northern Ontario a number of years back, when I was Minister of the Environment, and I was touring a pulp and paper mill. I asked the vice-president what was the effect to his company of a drop of one cent on the dollar. He said it was a \$17-million difference to that company when the dollar dropped one cent. The automotive industry has also done well as a result. So I'm really pleased to see that we have a dollar which allows that kind of competition and that we have low interest rates both in Canada and the United States.

We still have to look at international trade rules. I'm always apprehensive about any agreement which would impede us from promoting our culture. We're under assault from the United States, not in a military way but in an airwaves and print way in terms of the special culture that we have. We have predominantly, at least in Ontario and much of the country, English-speaking media; only in Quebec and certain other parts of the country do we have some French-speaking media and other languages out there. But because we're impacted so much by the United States media, we require certain safeguards to protect our culture and our environment. We do not want to have a circumstance internationally where those who are investing have rules which say we cannot impose upon those investors from those countries the same rules and regulations that we impose upon our own people.

Today we had a report out that the Minister of the Environment didn't want to let the cat out of the bag. There were certain environmentalists who wanted to get

some information about the environment, and the ministry said, "You're going to have to pay a few thousand bucks to get this information." Bud Wildman was the minister before; he'll remember this. He and I had to routinely release this report. It was accepted; it was out there for all to see, and that's the way it should be.

I think it's going to be important to have our rules, our regulations, our laws and our policies here in Ontario and here in Canada govern those who are going to invest in our country. We're not trying to chase investment away; we're simply trying to say, "When you invest in Canada, these are the rules to be followed." Our investors, who may invest elsewhere, will be looking I think at the same kinds of rules and should want the same rules.

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It is important to have this dialogue with others. I think it's important to have it on as open a basis as possible, with as much information available to the general public as possible, because of that potential impact on so many areas of our lives: environment, health care, education, cultural industries. That is why I think it's important that our national government, which does the negotiating for all of the country, look very carefully and assess all the ramifications of any agreements before ever entering into those agreements. I think you would find a pretty good consensus for that.

We have a pretty unique country and a pretty unique province here. We are somewhat different from the United States. Yes, their economy is booming and we're benefiting from that. I understand that. But also within the United States they have a lot of services which must be procured privately; that is, that those who have sufficient wealth to procure those services are able to do so, while lower-income people do not have that opportunity. That's different from what we've traditionally had and what we've built up in Ontario and in Canada over the years, where many of our public services emanate through the public sector, through the government. We do not have circumstances in this country as they have in the United States — at least, they are the rare exceptions — where people have to bankrupt themselves in order to meet their obligations of a financial nature as they relate to the health care they obtain.

When we have some good things here, like an excellent health care system we've had in years gone by — we're experiencing some considerable problems now but we've had that traditionally — when we have a strong education system, when we have good environmental laws that we've put into place, though heaven knows some of those are being weakened considerably today, when we have this special atmosphere and this special set of rules in our province and our country, we are entitled to want to preserve that and not have somebody from outside this country dictate what they shall be. Just because those people may not be happy with the investment atmosphere in this country because we have tough rules on the environment, or because we have special requirements as they relate to the health care system so that we don't privatize it, or because we have special rules that annoy

some people but are necessary to protect and preserve and promote our culture, we need not apologize for that. That should predominate over any considerations that those in other countries may have who want to invest in Canada.

Yes, we welcome investment in all of our provinces throughout the country. We do so, however, under the rules and regulations and policies which are developed, we hope, by a consensus of Canadians, Ontarians, British Columbians, wherever we happen to be in this country.

I always believe that with any international agreement, whether it's this or any other international agreement, governments should proceed with extreme care and caution. In supporting this motion before the House today, I am advocating that kind of care and caution when we deal on an international basis with other countries, but particularly those that are investing in this country. If we adopt this — I think we'll do so unanimously — we will have sent a message to those who are responsible for those negotiations.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I want to make a few remarks, as we wind up, to try to bring us back to the focus we originally wanted when I put forward this opposition day motion.

The resolution says:

"Whereas growing opposition throughout Canada and the world has forced a delay in negotiations, but has not killed the proposed MAI;

"Be it therefore resolved that this House urges the federal government to immediately demand a halt to the current MAI negotiations and call on the government to refuse to be part of any agreement that would enshrine the rights of corporate investors over the rights of the people of Canada and other countries around the world."

We want Canada to withdraw from the MAI, and we want the federal government to refuse to be a part of any agreement that would enshrine the rights of investors over the right to a clean environment, over human rights, over the right to cultural identity, over the rights of working people to work in a safe environment, over the rights of working people to engage in collective bargaining, over the rights of a province like Ontario to have a publicly funded, publicly administered system of medicare.

We want the federal government to say that it is not going to take part in any sort of international agreement that would put the rights of investors above all of these other rights. Let there be no mistake about it, that is what the current MAI is all about. That's exactly what it's all about. It's about giving investors, giving global corporations, more rights than anyone else, and not just more rights somewhere over there or somewhere on the other side of the globe, but more rights right here in Ontario, more rights right here in this province.

I heard one of the Liberal members say earlier that he wanted to debate health care today, that he wanted to debate education. Well, this is exactly what this is about. What global investors want to put in place is an international rule that would say that global corporations have rights across the globe to insist that if a province or a state wants to institute a system of public education because it's

in the best interests of those people, because it's in the best interests of their students, because it's in the best interests of the future of their society, if a corporation might potentially lose profit out of that decision, you have to pay the corporation damages, damages for standing up and supporting your own education system, for standing up and insisting on having a health care system that works for the people of your jurisdiction.

This is all about the future of health care, all about the future of education, all about the future of environmental protection, all about the capacity to engage in collective bargaining in the future, all about the protection of cultural industries and ensuring you have some control over your own culture, over what's printed in your own newspapers, over the kind of programming on your radio stations, your television stations. Is some of it made in Canada to reflect Canadian values or is it all imported from somewhere else and expressing other values?

Let there be no mistake about it, the MAI is trying to put in place rules which give investors, large international corporations, more rights than groups or organizations that want to have strong environmental laws within a jurisdiction.

Let me give you an example. The MAI the way it is written right now is very much based upon the North American free trade agreement. The North American free trade agreement gives corporations standing to sue a jurisdiction if that jurisdiction implements environmental laws which might have an impact on a corporation or its product. Canada rightly decided, I believe, not to allow certain fuel additives to be put into fuel in Canada. As a result, Ethyl Corp, an American-based corporation, I understand, is now suing Canada for \$350 million, saying that Canada's decision to protect our environment harmfully impacts Ethyl Corp, and if we want to stand up and protect our environment, we have to give \$350 million of payola to Ethyl Corp.

The MAI seeks to enshrine those sorts of nonsensical rules in international law. It seeks to create those sorts of nonsensical rules among all of the OECD countries. Then it wants to project those rules into the World Trade Organization so that all countries would have to agree to them.

1750

That's what it's about: Give investors, give global corporations greater power than they've ever had before, power to fight against environmental protection; power to fight against a publicly administered, publicly funded health care system; power to fight against a publicly funded, publicly administered education system; power to say that a given jurisdiction can't enact free collective bargaining laws because those free collective bargaining laws might interfere or in some way impact upon that corporation's profits or prospective future profits.

I want it to be very clear. We're not opposed to the global economy. We know the global economy is here. What this debate is about is simply this: What kind of global economy will it be? Will it be a global economy where international corporations run roughshod over all

the rest of us and dictate what sorts of environmental protections we'll be allowed to have, determine what sort of cultural identity we'll be allowed to have and what sorts of cultural protections we can build in, can tell us, "Oh, you're limited in terms of having the publicly funded, publicly administered education system because if you expand it too far it might have some sort of negative impact on our future profits?"

We're not opposed to the global economy, but we want people to be very thoughtful about writing the rules of that global economy. We know there need to be rules, but we need to have rules not just covering trade and investment; we need to have rules that say environmental standards will be applied, that corporations will not be benefited by picking on countries that have weak environmental rules and saying, "If you maintain these weak environmental protections, we'll invest here." We want protections for labour standards. We don't want corporations to be able to sort of gallyant across the globe and say: "We'll move production to this jurisdiction because they've got not only low environmental standards but low health and safety standards. We'll locate our production there to the detriment of everyone else."

We want protections for those kinds of things. We want international rules that provide that jurisdictions can have a publicly funded, publicly administered system of medicare, that you don't have to buy into some global international corporate perspective on health care or education.

We want rules, but we want rules that respect the environment, labour standards, health and safety standards, environment standards, cultural standards. We don't want rules that simply protect investors and then say to everyone else, "Now that we've protected investors, you can go talk with them."

That's very clear. It's very clear that's what is in the MAI. The MAI would give investors incredible protection in terms of their powers and rights. It would allow them to sue jurisdictions that want to expand their health care system and do it publicly, who want to expand their education system and do it publicly. It would allow corporations to sue where you bring in environmental standards. It gives global corporations, investors, almost superpower among all of the other issues out there that we think need to be debated, discussed and have supporting rules.

What does this MAI agreement say for core labour standards of freedom of association and collective bargaining? What does it say about prohibition of forced labour? What does it say about the elimination of child labour exploitation and non-discrimination in the workplace? What does it say? Does it provide any protections at all here? None. It provides none. All it says is that there ought to be some sort of collateral assurances for these things. I think we know what that means. I think we know that means that the rights of investors, the rights of global corporations, are up here and all the other things I've listed are down here. They come after, if they come at all.

That's not good enough. In fact I would argue it is totally the wrong direction, as if global corporations, as if banks and investment organizations, which now have control over more capital, more wealth than the majority of countries in the world, need more protection, as if health care needs less protection, as if the environment needs less protection, as if labour standards need less protection.

The problem with the MAI, besides the fact it's got the concept of putting investors first, besides that being wrong, is that it gives everything else that's important no attention at all, no emphasis at all.

We would argue that if we're going to have a rules-based global economy, the proper direction would be to negotiate protections for the environment, to negotiate protections for labour standards, to negotiate protections for cultural standards, to negotiate protections for education and health standards first — they are the things that are most important — and after that, sit down and look at the rights and the powers of global corporations and to what extent they need to be protected.

There's another part of this that is quite insidious. I mentioned earlier that the strategy on the part of global corporations here is to take what they got into the North American free trade agreement giving them the right to sue jurisdictions that bring in environmental standards, that bring in labour standards, that bring in cultural standards — they want to take that clause and put it in this Multilateral agreement on investment. The MAI is being negotiated at the OECD table, but that's not the end of it. What they then want to do, having established it at the OECD, is to take it to the poorer countries in the world and say to them: "You now have to live by this. It has to become part of the World Trade Organization, the world trade agreement."

Third World countries are very clear on what this means. They're very clear that this is an effort to go back to the sort of colonial attitude that we saw in the last century, where companies like the Levant, the British East India, the Dutch East India Co, the Hudson's Bay Co would hold a meeting to carve up the Third World and decide what happened where in the Third World. In many ways this is another attempt to do that again. First you do it among the organized economies. Then, once it's done among the organized economies, you can tell the poorer economies of the world: "These are the new rules. International corporations reign supreme. You cannot do anything in your country to bring in higher environmental standards. You cannot bring in higher health standards. You cannot bring in regimes which protect labour standards, health and safety or collective bargaining. You cannot do anything to protect your own indigenous culture."

That's the strategy here, and we wanted it debated today. We wanted it debated today because we believe that if this agreement happens, it will have an incredible impact on Ontario's health care system down the road, an incredible impact on our capacity to have strong environmental standards down the road, an incredible

impact on our capacity to have strong labour standards and health and safety standards down the road. So we want more attention focused on this debate. We want more people across Canada, especially here in Ontario, to understand that if we're going to fight for a strong health care system, a strong education system, strong environmental protection, strong labour protection —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Mr Silipo has moved opposition day motion number 1. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1759 to 1804.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Boyd, Marion	Hampton, Howard	Miclash, Frank
Bradley, James J.	Hoy, Pat	Patten, Richard
Brown, Michael A.	Kormos, Peter	Pouliot, Gilles
Caplan, David	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Silipo, Tony
Christopherson, David	Lessard, Wayne	Wildman, Bud
Churley, Marilyn	Marchese, Rosario	Wood, Len
Crozier, Bruce	Martel, Shelley	
Duncan, Dwight	Martin, Tony	

The Speaker: All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Amott, Ted	Froese, Tom	Murdoch, Bill
Baird, John R.	Gilchrist, Steve	Newman, Dan
Barrett, Toby	Grimmett, Bill	O'Toole, John
Bassett, Isabel	Guzzo, Garry J.	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Beaubien, Marcel	Hardeman, Ernie	Parker, John L.
Boushy, Dave	Hamick, Charles	Preston, Peter
Carr, Gary	Hodgson, Chris	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Carroll, Jack	Hudak, Tim	Ross, Lillian
Chudleigh, Ted	Johns, Helen	Runciman, Robert W.
Clement, Tony	Johnson, Bert	Saunderson, William
Cunningham, Dianne	Johnson, David	Sheehan, Frank
Danford, Harry	Jordan, W. Leo	Skarica, Toni
Doyle, Ed	Kells, Morley	Spina, Joseph
Ecker, Janet	Klees, Frank	Tascona, Joseph N.
Elliott, Brenda	Leach, Al	Tsubouchi, David H.
Eves, Ernie L.	Leadston, Gary L.	Turnbull, David
Flaherty, Jim	Maves, Bart	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Ford, Douglas B.	McLean, Allan K.	Wood, Bob
Fox, Gary	Munro, Julia	Young, Terence H.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 22; the nays are 57.

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost. It now being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:30 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1808.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma	Wildman, Bud (ND)	Fort York	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Frontenac-Addington	Vankoughnet, Bill (PC)
Beaches-Woodbine	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)
Brampton North / -Nord	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Guelph	Elliott, Brenda (PC)
Brampton South / -Sud	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Halton Centre / -Centre	Young, Terence H. (PC)
Brant-Haldimand	Preston, Peter L. (PC)	Halton North / -Nord	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Brantford	Johnson, Ron (PC)	Hamilton Centre / -Centre	Christopherson, David (ND)
Bruce	Fisher, Barbara (PC)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Burlington South / -Sud	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Seniors Issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (Affaires des personnes âgées)	Hamilton Mountain	Pettit, Trevor (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Ross, Lillian (PC)
Carleton	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of the Environment, government House leader / ministre de l'Environnement, leader parlementaire du gouvernement	Hastings-Peterborough	Danford, Harry (PC)
Carleton East / -Est	Morin, Gilles E. (L)	High Park-Swansea	Shea, Derwyn (PC)
Chatham-Kent	Carroll, Jack (PC)	Huron	Johns, Helen (PC)
Cochrane North / -Nord	Wood, Len (ND)	Kenora	Miclash, Frank (L)
Cochrane South / -Sud	Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Cornwall	Cleary, John C. (L)	Kitchener	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Don Mills	Johnson, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Education and Training / ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation	Kitchener-Wilmot	Leadston, Gary L. (PC)
Dovercourt	Silipo, Tony (ND)	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	Pouliot, Gilles (ND)
Downsview	Castrilli, Annamaria (L)	Lambton	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Dufferin-Peel	Tilson, David (PC)	Lanark-Renfrew	Jordan, W. Leo (PC)
Durham Centre / -Centre	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Labour, Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / ministre du Travail, solliciteur général et ministre des Services correctionnels	Lawrence	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
Durham East / -Est	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
Durham West / -Ouest	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires	Lincoln	Sheehan, Frank (PC)
Durham-York	Munro, Julia (PC)	London Centre / -Centre	Boyd, Marion (ND)
Eglinton	Saunderson, William (PC)	London North / -Nord	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguee à la Condition féminine
Elgin	North, Peter (Ind)	London South / -Sud	Wood, Bob (PC)
Essex-Kent	Hoy, Pat (L)	Markham	Tsoubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Essex South / -Sud	Crozier, Bruce (L)	Middlesex	Smith, Bruce (PC)
Etobicoke-Humber	Ford, Douglas B. (PC)	Mississauga East / -Est	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)	Mississauga North / -Nord	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Etobicoke-Rexdale	Hastings, John (PC)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Children's Issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (enfance)
Etobicoke West / -Ouest	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Speaker / Président	Mississauga West / -Ouest	Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Privatization) / ministre sans portefeuille (privatisation)
Fort William	McLeod, Lyn (L)	Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne	Grimmett, Bill (PC)
		Nepean	Baird, John R. (PC)
		Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Niagara South / -Sud Nipissing	Hudak, Tim (PC) Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Sarnia Sault Ste Marie / Sault-Sainte-Marie	Boushy, Dave (PC) Martin, Tony (ND) Phillips, Gerry (L)
Norfolk	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Newman, Dan (PC)
Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Oakville South / -Sud	Carr, Gary (PC)	Scarborough East / -Est	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)
Oakwood	Colle, Mike (L)	Scarborough-Ellesmere	Curling, Alvin (L)
Oriole	Caplan, David (L)	Scarborough North / -Nord	Brown, Jim (PC)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Scarborough West / -Ouest	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	McLean, Allan K. (PC)
Ottawa East / -Est	Grandmaître, Bernard (L)	Simcoe East / -Est	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Ottawa-Rideau	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Simcoe West / -Ouest	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition		Martel, Shelley (ND)
Ottawa West / -Ouest	Cullen, Alex (L)	Sudbury	Ramsay, David (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Sudbury East / -Est	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines, président du Conseil de gestion
Parkdale	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Timiskaming	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé
Parry Sound	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Victoria-Haliburton	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Perth	Johnson, Bert (PC)		Arnott, Ted (PC)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Waterloo North / -Nord	Doyle, Ed (PC)
Port Arthur	Gravelle, Michael (L)	Welland-Thorold	Skarica, Toni (PC)
Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Wellington	Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Prince Edward-Lennox- South Hastings /		Wentworth East / -Est	Kwinter, Monte (L)
Prince Edward-Lennox- Hastings-Sud	Fox, Gary (PC)	Wentworth North / -Nord	Lessard, Wayne (ND)
Quinte	Rollins, E.J. Douglas (PC)	Willowdale	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique		Duncan, Dwight (L)
Renfrew North / -Nord	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Wilson Heights	Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Riverdale	Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Windsor-Riverside	Parker, John L. (PC)
S-D-G & East Grenville / S-D-G et Grenville-Est	Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Windsor-Sandwich	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister without Portfolio / ministre sans portefeuille
St Andrew-St Patrick	Bassett, Hon / L'hon Isabel (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs	Windsor-Walkerville	Klees, Frank (PC)
St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)	York Centre / -Centre	Sergio, Mario (L)
St Catharines-Brock	Froese, Tom (PC)	York East / -Est	Kennedy, Gerard (L)
St George-St David	Leach, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	York Mills	
		York-Mackenzie	
		Yorkview	
		York South / -Sud	
		Nickel Belt	Vacant

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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de l'Ontario
Deuxième session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 11 May 1998

Lundi 11 mai 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 11 May 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 11 mai 1998

The House met at 1831.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

1998 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the adjourned debate on the amendment to the amendment to the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to continue the debate on the budget. I want to start talking about something we discussed earlier in the Legislature this afternoon, and that is, what are the real numbers? What's really happening to the deficit and the finances of the province? The people of Ontario assume that the budget will be the document that gives them the most accurate reflection of the finances of their province. As I said earlier, if this were a publicly traded company, this would be the prospectus, if you will.

The first thing I wanted to talk about on the budget was to say that I don't think the budget any longer reflects an accurate statement of the finances of the province. The reason I say that is that the government has decided in the fiscal year just ended, March 31, 1998, to write off \$3.2 billion of what was called restructuring money. I have no difficulty with governments writing off restructuring money if it truly is restructuring money, but what the government did, and they just did it in the last few days, was to write off at least \$1.7 billion of expenses that were planned for this fiscal year, 1998-99, and next fiscal year, 1999-2000. They simply took those expenses, moved them back into last fiscal year, and wrote them off.

The Minister of Finance, by the way, today in explaining was incorrect. He said it was teacher pension money; it wasn't. It was \$971 million of school board expenses, \$800 million of planned capital expenditures for the Sheppard subway, and those moneys were moved back to last fiscal year. In my opinion — and I look forward to the Provincial Auditor's comments on this — the deficit that was reported last year of \$5.2 billion is incorrect. The deficit last year, the fiscal year that just ended, is closer to \$3.5 billion.

Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand): We did a better job.

Mr Phillips: The member across says, "We did a better job." I think the people are entitled to the most accurate reflection of the finances possible. It will be up to the

Provincial Auditor to make that comment and I look forward to it, because —

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): The member for Quinte, please.

Mr Phillips: He may not want to hear all of this, but as I said earlier, I think the real deficit last year was \$3.5 billion.

Mr Preston: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: If you're going to chastise me, I'm from Brant-Haldimand.

The Acting Speaker: Okay. I think you understood the message just the same.

Mr Phillips: The member for Brant-Haldimand, when the public is anxious for a debate on the finances, is choosing to be in here tonight barracking. You're quite right, Mr Speaker, to try and bring him to order; I realize it may be difficult for you.

That's the first point I wanted to make: I don't think the financial reporting any longer reflects reality. It will be up to the Provincial Auditor to point that out, but I think the deficit last year was closer to \$3.5 billion, and of course what it means this year is that the deficit, rather than being roughly the \$4 billion that's planned, will be dramatically lower than that. I think it's unfortunate that, for whatever reason, the government now is choosing, in my opinion, and I look forward to the Provincial Auditor, to no longer reflect reality in the budget.

While I'm on that, there is another issue that I think is extremely troubling and is relevant to our budget, and that is the way Ontario Hydro is now reporting its finances. Recognize this: The credit rating agencies, the agencies that tell Ontario and the public and those who loan money to Ontario the creditworthiness of Ontario, are extremely worried about Hydro. Hydro, in their annual report released just last week, decided to write off against last fiscal year \$6.5 billion of expenses. This is what the financial statement says, that the related amounts which would have been charged to future operations under generally accepted accounting principles weren't. In other words, the board of directors at Hydro, for whatever reason, used a loophole in their authority to write off \$6.5 billion worth of expenses that should have been incurred in 1998, 1999, and 2000. They wrote them off against last year and they did not use generally accepted accounting principles.

The public may wonder, who really cares about all that? You should care about it for two reasons. One reason it was done is because Premier Harris promised no rate increases. If they had followed generally accepted

accounting principles, there would have had to have been rate increases, but they chose to use this loophole and write it off against last fiscal year. This is what the chairman, Mr Farlinger, says about it: "The effect of all of this," using the loophole, writing off \$6.5 billion, "is that Ontario Hydro will be able to maintain its commitment to a rate freeze until the end of the decade. This accounting decision will not affect our future competitiveness."

I say to the public that for the first time now, in my opinion, and the Provincial Auditor will be the final arbiter of this, we have a budget that doesn't reflect accurately the finances of the province, and we have a very serious problem at Ontario Hydro, where they are using a loophole to not accurately reflect the finances at Ontario Hydro. We all know the problem as the financial community becomes aware of these issues.

I want to talk also briefly about teachers' pensions. The government has, in its financial statements for 1998-99, an expense of \$62 million for teachers' pensions. We asked the officials, "How much will we actually be spending in cash in 1998-99?" They said, "Actually, we will be expending, laying out in cash, \$1.2 billion." So we said: "Wait a minute. We're reporting an expense of \$62 million and a cash outlay of \$1.2 billion. Why is that?" You get the answer, "Well, one is accrual accounting and one is cash accounting." I would just say again to the public, as you look to the budget as the document that gives you your best indication of the finances of the province, \$62 million —

Hon David Turnbull (Minister without Portfolio): Gerry, tell us about your last budget.

Mr Phillips: Mr Turnbull gets in here as usual and starts to barrack, but I would just say that I think the public is owed an explanation of the \$1.2 billion of cash that will be spent by the taxpayers and the \$62 million recorded on our books.

1840

The next issue I want to talk about in the budget is gambling. In the budget Premier Harris acknowledges that there is going to be widespread introduction of slot machines. As a matter of fact, the budget outlines that people in Ontario will lose about \$1 billion in the slot machines. They will go in there and they will stay in there: \$1 billion, which incidentally is virtually identical to the tax cut. The tax cut in this budget is \$1 billion; the amount of money that people will lose in Ontario in slot machines is \$1 billion.

I say to the people of Ontario, if it is crucial that Ontario borrow money for a tax cut to stimulate the economy, wouldn't taking \$1 billion out of people's pockets for slot machines represent a drag on the economy? In the budget it says, "We will use all the money gained from slot machines as incremental money to fund health care."

This is now clear: The quality of our health care system in Ontario will depend on how much money is lost by people in slot machines. If they \$500 million, there will be less money for health than if they lose \$1 billion, because the slot machine revenue will be spent incrementally on health care. Nothing now could be clearer than that the

quality of our health care system will depend now on how much money we rake in from slot machines. I say to Ontarians, is that really what we want? Do we want our health care system dependent on slot machine revenues? It seems to me that something as fundamental and important as our health care shouldn't depend on the revenue from slot machines.

I might add that I think the introduction of 44 casinos across the province with — I think the province is planning 15,000 slot machines. The numbers they've given us indicate people will lose \$1 billion on slot machines. I think we are heading into uncharted waters, and certainly relying on slot machines for the quality of our health care is dead wrong.

The next item I want to talk about is education and the way we now record education spending on the province's books. I will remind us once again that now the province, Mike Harris, sets the education property tax rates. The fourth-largest source of revenue for the province now is property taxes. A year ago the province got zero from property tax. Now, this year, the province will set over \$6 billion of property taxes. By the way, for the public, it's quite extraordinary that these tax rates are set without even a debate here. We never have a chance to debate the setting of \$6 billion worth of property taxes.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): It's undemocratic.

Mr Phillips: It's undemocratic, as my colleague said.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): We're doing it right now.

Mr Phillips: We are not doing it. We will have no opportunity for a vote on it. Mr Baird says, "We're doing it right now." If any council in this province ever tried this, to set taxes without a vote, without giving anybody a chance to vote — we will never vote on it. We'll never have a chance to vote on it. Mike Harris will simply say, "There's what it will be."

Mr Baird: What about at 9:30?

The Acting Speaker: Member for Nepean, there will be a period for questions and comments.

Mr Phillips: Mr Baird says we'll vote on it at 9:30. We will not vote on any property tax rates at all. People will not have an opportunity to come here and say, "When did you approve this 0.46 property tax?" We never did, never had a vote in the Legislature on it. I would say to the businesses in this province, when you look at your property taxes, over half of your property taxes are now set by Mike Harris, and it's all done by what we call around here regulation, not even a debate here in the Legislature about the rate Mike Harris is going to set, and he can set it each year through regulation. Next year, if he wants a different rate, he sets a different rate.

Today we had a briefing — this is interesting — on the property tax bill. I asked, "Now that the province is setting the education property taxes, will it appear as provincial revenue in the budget?" They said: "Oh, yes, now that the province is setting it, it will. It'll have to show here as provincial revenue." I said: "That's good. I agree with that. We're getting somewhere." The bureaucrats

said, "Yes, it'll be part of the budget revenues, now the fourth-largest source of revenue." So we got confirmation at the meeting and we left the meeting. I was there with one of my colleagues, Mr Crozier; my colleague right behind me was there and he'll confirm that the bureaucrats said, "Of course it should be there." I got back to my office and I got a call from the political staff saying: "There was a little mistake made. It will not show up as provincial revenue."

We've asked — on behalf of my caucus I've asked — the Provincial Auditor to look at this, because what could now be clearer than that the province sets the property tax rate? Nobody else does it. Mike Harris sets it. It's set provincially. Every single school board budget is set by the province, down to the last penny, and education now is completely in the control of the Premier. The reason it's important is that if we want to understand the finances of the province and who's responsible for what — by the way, it's clear that school boards have debt of roughly \$3 billion to \$4 billion that now can only be handled by the province. That should be on the provincial books if we want to have an accurate reflection of our finances.

The reason I spend so much time on this is that I always say to my business friends that if Ontario were a company going to the Ontario Securities Commission to get listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange, they wouldn't list this company, because they'd say the numbers don't reflect the company's "profitability," and I go through the various issues.

First, in my opinion, and I think the Provincial Auditor may very well support it, we are playing huge games now. Revenue starts to roll in, so the province just keeps throwing more and more expenses against it rather than saying, "They're thrown in and the finances are improving," because politically Mike Harris didn't want to show a lower deficit than \$5.2 billion, so there are these "restructuring" moneys, but only two weeks ago they were presented to us as regular school board spending; now they are "restructuring" moneys. The TTC capital for five years was laid out for us in a plan, then suddenly, when the money rolled in, it was all written off in one year. We are playing substantial games with the books of the province.

The good news is that I think the rating agencies understand that and will see through it and will analyse the numbers, but playing games with budget books — and then, in my opinion, Hydro playing significant games, refusing to use normal accounting principles, writing off \$6.5 billion of future expenses to the previous year, for two reasons. One key reason was that if they didn't do that, they would have been forced to raise rates, and of course Mike Harris doesn't want rates raised 12 months before an election, so the taxpayers are forced to move \$6.5 billion on to last year's books, in my opinion inappropriately.

1850

I have only a minute and a half to go here now, but just to summarize, our concern is that the budget doesn't reflect reality. Hydro's budget doesn't reflect reality. The

taxpayers of Ontario guarantee Hydro's debt. If Hydro has a problem with debt, it's our problem, because we guarantee it.

The gambling is dangerous. Counting on \$1 billion to be lost in slot machines by hardworking Ontario taxpayers to fund our health care system — if they don't lose it, the health care system doesn't get it; if they do lose it, it does get it — is no way to plan a health care system.

Finally, I agree with the bureaucrats, with the civil service: I think the education property tax revenue now should be shown as part of provincial revenue. It's now the fourth-largest source of revenue.

We no longer have an accurate reflection of the finances of the province, and that's unfortunate because that is the basis on which Ontario residents should be able to judge the financial wellbeing of the province.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I want to congratulate my friend from Scarborough-Agincourt on his presentation. I would just like to focus on one particular aspect. He talked about the folly of depending on gambling profits from slot machines to fund basic services that are fundamental to our society, like health care. I think most of us who have thought about this will understand that's not an appropriate way of doing things.

When we were in government — and let's face it, all parties have had something to do with the changes with regard to gaming in the province. The Liberal government moved forward with the Ontario Lottery Corp. Our government brought in the casinos. This Premier, when he was in opposition, said that in Ontario there was not a revenue problem, there was an expenditure problem, that you didn't need any revenue. He wasn't interested in revenue from casinos or gaming, he simply wanted to cut expenditures. Well, he certainly has cut expenditures, but he has vastly expanded the gaming aspects in this province over and above what either of the other two parties proposed.

When we were in government, there were people who were interested in this aspect who said two things to us. One was, "You should go for VLTs, and if not VLTs, slot machines." We asked about the odds on those machines. I was told the odds are about 90 to 1. That's where the big casinos in the United States make their money.

Mr Patten: In whose favour?

Mr Wildman: In favour of the government. You might ask why we didn't do it. We didn't do it because it meant that very many people would become addicted. This government has done that, plus they're getting rid of charity casinos and bringing in 44 permanent casinos. It's unthinkable.

Mr Baird: I listened with great interest to the remarks of my colleague the member for Scarborough-Agincourt. With great surprise I saw him hold up a copy of the budget and say, "If you were to take this down the street to the Ontario Securities Commission and ask it if the numbers in this budget accurately reflected the profitability of the company" — and I notice he didn't mention in his remarks the true numbers reflected in this budget, the more than

350,000 net new jobs created in the province. I think most people in Ontario would look very wisely and well at these numbers and they'd say that they reflect very well the profitability of the company. Nor did he mention the 250,000 people who no longer are dependent on government assistance, on handouts. Independent studies have said a majority of them are out in the labour market earning their own keep in the dignity of their own jobs. I don't think he mentioned that.

He also went on with great fanfare about accrual accounting. I'll tell you where accrual accounting came from: It came as a result of the Ontario Financial Review Commission brought in after this government was elected. They looked at the financial procedures of the past two governments and recommended a whole host of measures to try to clean up the system. These good people showed up in government after the 1990 election and heard about a \$78-million surplus. I look over at my friends in the New Democratic Party. Was there a \$78-million surplus?

Mr Wildman: No, there was a \$400-million deficit.

Mr Baird: A \$400-million deficit. I think if you actually looked at it, it would be a \$3-billion deficit. Yet they ran very glossy ads in every part of the province talking about how they had delivered a balanced budget to Ontario. Miraculously, within 21 days, when Floyd Laughren took over the treasury of this province, he found a gigantic deficit. In fact, it was the biggest deficit in the —

Mr Wildman: A \$4-billion deficit.

Mr Baird: — a \$4-billion deficit, the member for Algonia says — one of the biggest deficits in the province's history. That is important to put on the record. We look very sceptically at some of these claims.

He talked about debate on the budget. This is the first time this government has mandated that we will have a debate on the budget and mandated that every member will have to get up and say "yea" or "nay" and have a mandated vote on this budget. That's good news found accountability.

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): I'd just like to begin by saying how fortunate we are to have a member of this calibre with his financial background to show us the other side of the budget. When I attend classes in high schools, I always talk about democracy and about how there's always the other side.

I'd just like to begin my comments by suggesting that we are very fortunate with Mr Phillips, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, to alert us to the other facts that can be seen. As a good number of us know, he does this on a regular basis through what he calls the Treasury Watch.

Mr Baird: Often quoted as an independent source of information.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Nepean, you had your turn.

Mr Miclash: In that document, he lets people know the other side of what's going on in terms of what the government is doing with the books here in Ontario.

As the member has indicated, the Provincial Auditor will be commenting on the budget. We're certainly looking forward to those comments and to what he's going to

say about Ontario Hydro, the \$6.5-billion write-off, as the member has indicated, and the loopholes that are being used by Ontario Hydro and what's going to happen there. He will also probably comment on the teacher pension plan, where we hear a figure of \$1.2 billion versus a figure of \$62 million recorded on the books — again, something very interesting, something that we look forward to the Provincial Auditor taking a closer look at.

The thing the member raises as well that touches home with me is the borrowing of the dollars to service the tax cut and the addition of the \$5 billion to the provincial debt. A lot of people don't understand that, but we are being faced with an additional \$5 billion being put on the provincial debt.

Again, I would just like to point out that we're always happy to have this member talk a little bit about the other side and give us a real, true feeling about what the budget means to many Ontarians.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): I too very much enjoyed the remarks from the member for Scarborough-Agincourt. We did fight some battles, sir, and I've benefited from the good counsel and mostly always, through good research, relatively accurate figures. He too highlighted his presentation by saying, "Where is the money?"

It's not so much that the government has two, three or four different sets of books, it's that under one set of books they have many, many different accounts. It's really tales of Houdini, pretty cheap accounting, because in the private sector it's the same tactics and strategies, because it's nothing short, nothing more than that. The kind of poudre aux yeux, the kind of a shell game without the pea. There are no winners here, except that the government is packing. Don't go looking for the truth with the last budget. You shall not find it.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): The pea? Is that it? Is there no pea?

Mr Pouliot: Keep your mouth shut for a second; you'll have your chance.

The minister said, "A promise made, a promise kept." He said: "I'm returning money to the people of Ontario. It belongs to all of us. It doesn't belong to any government, certainly not ours."

Wrong again, because this is borrowed money and the benefactors are the bond holders, those people across and others who clip coupons. But the people have not gained by this budget; quite the contrary, as the member from Agincourt has reminded us.

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The Acting Speaker: The member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

Mr Phillips: I appreciate the comments of each of the members. The member for Nepean may not be aware of the facts. He indicated this will be the first time there's been a vote on the budget. He implies this hasn't been done before. In 1989, eight days of debate, a vote; in 1988, 11 days of debate and a vote; in 1986, eight days of debate and a vote; in 1985, seven days and a vote; in 1984, eight days and vote.

Mr Baird: And 1990, 1991, 1992.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Nepean, you had your turn.

Mr Phillips: Mr Baird probably needs to check his facts.

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): What, again?

Mr Phillips: Again, as they say.

Also, just a small point, but he said that people on social assistance are getting government handouts. I think that was an unfortunate expression of his and I want to dissociate myself from that comment. I don't view people on social assistance as getting government handouts. I view them as needing help. Rather than a handout, it is a plan to assist, in many respects, our less fortunate.

The member for Algoma mentioned gambling. I want to tell you, this is going to be seen as obscene — a billion dollars being lost by hardworking people in Ontario on slot machines and the amount of money that goes into health dependent on how much money they lose. It simply is bizarre that the quality of our health care system now is going to depend on the amount of money going into the slot machines. It's wrong. I don't know who in the government made that decision, but I think people in Ontario who are worried about health care will say: "I don't want the quality of my health care system dependent on how many people are unfortunately going to have to lose money in slot machines. If it's right, we do it."

The Acting Speaker: The member for Sault Ste Marie.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): Two weeks ago in this place we heard a speech from the throne where the usual suspects, as pointed to by this government, were again presented to us: the poor; organized workers, union workers; and criminals, or people who find themselves unfortunately incarcerated for doing something usually dumb or silly or out of sync with the community in which they live.

Then, a week later, we got a budget that painted this picture of an economy that is just churning along on all eight cylinders. For me — I don't know about you — it begs the question, if we're doing so well and the economy is doing so well and there is so much money being generated out there, why are we targeting anybody? Why are some people winning and some people losing, and why is it that those who are losing are in every instance the most unfortunate among us, the most challenged among us, the most marginalized among us? That's the question I ask when I spend some time looking at what's transpired here in the last couple of weeks.

I have to tell you, it leaves me with this terrible sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach that we're heading down a road that is not in any way consistent with the Canadian story. As I said earlier in the day, the narrative that we used to live our life by, the narrative that guided the development of community and the way government operated in this province and in this country is broken. Somebody needs to say that. Somebody needs to paint that picture so that others can see.

I guess that's the other thing that concerns me in light of all of this, that there are so few, it seems, out there who

understand, who are able to put a finger on why it is that in a land of plenty so many, more and more as each day goes by, are so anxious about their future, the future of their children and the future of the community they live in. It speaks to me in a different part of my experience and my being.

As many of you in this place will know, I'm an immigrant to this country. I come from Ireland. Not so many years ago in Ireland there was a famine. It's often referred to as the potato famine, and in probably some very meaningful way it was a potato famine. That's what the powers that be in those days would have you believe it was. But in fact it wasn't a potato famine, although the potato crop failed. It was an exercise of manipulation of the economy by an élite few who took advantage of the many working people to make an extra few dollars, given a very challenging circumstance.

I just want to read for you, if you'll indulge me for a moment, a small piece from a book I've been reading lately called *Famine Diary*. It's a book written by a fellow by the name of Gerald Keegan, who actually lived through the famine to tell the story. One chapter starts off with a poem.

"Weary men, what reap ye?

"Golden corn for the stranger.

"What sow ye? Human corpses for the avenger.

"Fainting forms, hunger stricken,

"What see ye in the offing?

"Stately ships that bear our food away,

"Amid the stranger's scoffing.

"There's a proud array of soldiers,

"What do they round your door?

"They guard our masters granaries,

"From the thin hands of the poor."

It goes on to say:

"March 31. It is early morning as I write this last note before departing. We now join a huge army forced to leave their native land for the convenience of the rich and the powerful. The heavy morning mist is a fitting curtain for the final scene, the climax, of all our strivings against impossible odds. It is a scene of utter devastation. A line from *Dark Rosaleen* comes to my mind:

"Woe and pain, pain and woe

"Are your lot both night and noon."

"I cannot help but glance back through the pages of history to the years when Ireland was a beacon of learning and faith whose light spread to all parts of Europe. Her poets, bards and musicians were known and loved throughout the land. Her monasteries were centres of faith and culture, a light to the world. God grant that those days of glory may some day return to *Dark Rosaleen*.

"The judgement hour must first be nigh

"Ere you can fade, ere you can die,

"My *Dark Rosaleen*."

The folks across the way laugh. They laugh at the lot of those who are destroyed by the economic situation that was imposed upon them by the élite of their day. They're not able to relate that to what's happening in Ontario today. That's obvious, because if they did, they wouldn't

be laughing. It wouldn't be a joking matter. It wouldn't be funny. They would know that in their own communities, by way of the very destructive decisions they have made since they came to power in 1995, more and more families are going hungry, more and more families are losing their homes, more and more families are getting sick and are not able to access the health care they need. More and more families are struggling to find a place, to find a way to support themselves, and they can't. In the very few instances where they can, the recompense is so meagre that it's almost as disparaging and disappointing and depressing as the situation they're trying to get out of.

It's interesting when you look at the history of the Irish people and the fact that the British came in and took over their land and pushed them ever more aggressively into a corner of the property they once owned and tilled to feed themselves and their neighbours so that the land owner, the lord, could plant and grow and sell cash crops to foreigners, export. Does this sound familiar to some of you? It certainly does to me.

1910

As they got pushed further and further into that corner of their property that they once owned and they used that little piece of land to produce, yes, that staple of Ireland for so many years, as it is again, the potato, the nutrients ran out and the potato went sour, and the people died. Did the élite of that day, did the land owners of that day, did the barons of that day, did the industrialists of that day, did those people who were making money hand over fist off the product of that land of that day come to the aid of those dying workers? No, they didn't. They watched.

Mr Murdoch: Where was this?

Mr Martin: Ireland. If you'd pay attention, you'd know, Bill.

Did they come to the rescue of those people? No, they didn't. They died.

Did the people of the day rise up in opposition to what they knew was an injustice, an unfairness among them? No, they didn't, until it was too late. There's something there for us today to contemplate, to look at, to think about for a minute.

We don't have to look even much further than Central and South America for another example of exactly the same phenomenon. We had people down there, small farming people, who owned plots of land that they grew crops on, that they fed their families from. The industrialists and the venture capitalists and the businesspeople from North America went down there and took a look and they saw land that was rich in nutrients, that could produce crops, but not the kind of crops that would feed the people of places like Brazil and Guatemala and Mexico and El Salvador. No, they were looking for crops that they could sell on the market in North America, like coffee, for example, that would do nothing, really, for the people of that area by way of their daily existence. They thought that was okay. As a matter of fact, they went to the peasants and they said, "I'll give you \$10,000 for that piece of land." These people had never seen \$10,000 in their life before. They thought they had won the lottery.

As a matter of fact, listening to my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt a few minutes ago when he talked about the new economy based on casinos that we're introducing in Ontario, it's not that dissimilar. These people thought they had won the lottery. They took the \$10,000, they moved to the city, and within a year or two that money was gone and those people were paupers in their own country, in the city, where they were unfamiliar with the way of that place. They descended ever so quickly into more dire poverty with each day that went by.

I had a friend who went down there in the mid-1970s to do some work in Mexico and Guatemala and El Salvador and Costa Rica. She came back and she spoke to me about the poverty she saw. I said: "What can I do to help? How can I be most helpful to you in that very important work that you do down there?"

You know what she said to me? She didn't say, "Come on down." She didn't say, "Send all your money down." She said: "Make sure that what's happening down here does not happen up there, that the gains you've made in places like Canada and Ontario under the guise of health care, under the aegis of education for everybody, under the programs of social assistance that you provide for people who find themselves down on their luck — make sure that the powers that be who are taking so much away from the people I work with every day do not begin to do the same thing up there in Canada. If they do, we have nothing to point to any more, we have nothing to shoot for any more, because then we become the model, we become the target, we become the level to which everybody else has to measure up." She said, "Please don't let that happen."

That's one of the reasons I'm here today, because I took her seriously when she said that and so I became involved in my own community, became involved in working with people who were struggling in one way or another. In Sault Ste Marie I set up a soup kitchen in the early 1980s so that I could do some direct action with people, so that I could understand their lives and what they were struggling with, so that I could from there begin to do some public education with the larger community in which I lived.

Eventually, who knows what happens? But I ended up here so that I could from this vantage point speak out as sincerely and as articulately and as often as I could on behalf of those who are now becoming more and more, with every day that goes by, the victims of this government driven by, yes, other mandarins, other bosses out there who are driven by greed and fear, who have no soul, who have no conscience, who have no other interest but the bottom line, to do whatever it takes to get rid of the programs that are costly and bring in opportunity for investment, no matter the cost to our labour standards, to our environmental standards, to our social programs. That's why I stand here today and speak to you about that.

I ask people out there and across the way and around this House to please think twice, think hard about what it is that we do. Look around your community, because we are becoming more and more frayed at the edges. As the edge gets frayed and we don't do anything about it, we

just leave it there and we don't attend to it, it begins to eat more and more towards the middle. Pretty soon the middle-class working people of Ontario begin to feel the tension and the disease that enters the community. As they begin to feel the disease and the tension and the anxiety, the whole community begins to suffer.

I dare say to any of you, if you spend any time at home, at the coffee shop or at the grocery store, or if you go to church on Sunday and talk to the folks on your way in or your way out, they will tell you now that even though the statistics are saying there are more jobs, there's more money, the economy's doing well, that we're poised for strong industrial growth down the road, the people out there, the working-class people, the middle-class working people of Ontario are feeling more and more anxious about themselves, and most particularly about their kids, about their families, about their aging parents and about their community.

That's sad, because it doesn't need to be that way. Ontario is a strong industrial economy. Ontario can afford to provide for all of us who call Ontario home.

It's interesting that this newspaper they call the Catholic Register, which I've read for so many years and which used to be, in my view — and I'm often wrong — such a right-wing piece of work has more and more become a paper that I look forward to seeing, because it has some very excellent exposés of the impact of the decisions of this government on those out there whom we, if you call yourselves Christian people, are most concerned about. This is the issue of May 4 and it's an article talking about the fact that Bishop John O'Mara in St Catharines came out in support of the Days of Action in your community. John O'Mara said, "People Urged to Reflect on Harris's Attack on the Poor."

I would suggest to you that that attack on the poor may soon be at your front door, may soon be affecting you or your neighbour or somebody in your family. The disease that's in the land, the disease that's out there that is making people anxious, that is causing people concern, that is making them stay awake at night thinking about themselves, their families, their aging parents, their neighbours, is growing. This government doesn't seem to have the will or the intestinal fortitude or the intelligence to really do anything significant about it.

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Is there a model we could follow? Is there another way? Of course there is. There are many other ways, there are many other approaches and there are many other jurisdictions around this world we could look at for example, some of them in the Scandinavian countries, where they do things differently, where they know that to pool money by way of taxes provides opportunity to people that will pay off in the long run. It creates stability in the economy and it gives people confidence, and people are investing in those jurisdictions, funnily enough.

Not too long ago the Catholic church became so concerned about this direction we are going in, this direction we seem to be choosing, which is more concerned about deficit fighting and interest rates and the value of the

dollar and less concerned about people, that they put out a statement that they called Ethical Reflections and Political Choices.

Interjection: Read a section.

Mr Martin: I will. Here's a little piece of it for you:

"When we apply the beatitudes of the kingdom to our everyday reality — economic, political, social, cultural, religious — we make our own lives living parables. When our lives touch other lives in living parables, however modest — a helping hand, a willing ear, sharing our time and talents, coming together in mutual support and solace — we give hope to one another." Interesting concept.

"Two fundamental gospel principles: the preferential option for the poor and the special value and the dignity of human work" — something we should maybe think about as we consider the budget that was presented to us a week ago, as we consider the speech from the throne that we all heard here only a week ago.

Speaker, I ask you and the others present to please listen to the folks out there.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's important that I respond to the comments made by the member for Sault Ste Marie. He mentioned the important contribution of the Irish to Ontario and he made some reference to their difficult struggles throughout time. It's important to remind the member to be here on Thursday morning for private members' session, when Bill 8 will be discussed, the Irish Heritage Day Act. It's to recognize the hard work and contribution of that particular culture not only to Ontario but indeed to Canada and throughout the world, actually. That's my private member's bill.

I say to the member that the NDP's contribution to the economy of Ontario that will be best remembered is the social contract, where they had almost pillaged every other ministry and every other expenditure and they couldn't wait to get their greedy hands on the contracts of hardworking Ontarians. They just whacked them. I think they will long remember the legacy they left to Ontario.

In contrast, the memory Ontario workers will have of the Conservative government is that we're giving them a tax break for the first time in the history of this province. Hardworking families are getting some of their earned dollars back to spend and to invest as they see fit.

But the most important legacy in this budget was in two critical areas: first, the commitments to health care, specifically the \$1.2 billion to long-term care; and the other was the additional moneys committed to education, classroom spending and excellence. I think that will go down as a memorable contribution. Every Ontarian will benefit. Children, parents, all Ontarians will benefit from the changes in our budget.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I have a comment to the member for Durham East. I too remember very well in the last week or so the commitment of \$1.2 billion to long-term care. But we must remember that it wasn't in this budget; it's over an eight-year period. It's going to bring long-term-care beds up to about 1,000 less than what is needed this very day.

Earlier this evening the member for Nepean was commenting on my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt's comments. I would ask the member for Nepean to look at the Ontario Provincial Auditor's report for 1991, on page 14, where he says: "Ontario has had only one surplus in the last 20 years, the year ended March 31, 1990."

I further point out to the member for Nepean that if he looks on page 56 of the Ernie Eves-Mike Harris 1998 budget, under "Ten-Year Review," it points out that in 1989-90 there was a surplus of some \$90 million. If you don't believe the Provincial Auditor, the very least you could do is believe what your own Treasurer and finance minister says, and that was that in the last year of the Liberal mandate the surplus was \$90 million. You'll find that on page 56 of your budget.

Mr Wildman: I want to congratulate my good friend from Sault Ste Marie on his presentation. I think it was interesting that he chose to look at the long, difficult and tragic history of the Irish people for parallels about what is happening in the so-called global marketplace we have today and what is happening in Ontario under this government. Essentially, he was trying to point out that the pursuit of profit on the part of those wealthy who controlled the Irish lands was continued even in the face of very difficult times. The Irish people were largely marginalized, pushed off their land and forced to emigrate to look for opportunities elsewhere, largely in North America but in other parts of the world as well.

I just returned with some of my colleagues from visiting Quebec City last week. We were in the vicinity of the quarantine island where unfortunately, as we all know, thousands of those Irish died of cholera, having crossed the ocean in terrible conditions, and are buried in what has now become a national park.

What my friend from Sault Ste Marie was saying is that we must not ever allow the pursuit of profit or even the worship of the so-called invisible hand of the marketplace to be so predominant that we don't respond to the needs of the vulnerable, the poor, the sick and those in need. This government has a tendency, every time they run into difficulties, to attack the poor. This is a government that believes the poor have too much wealth and the rich don't have enough, and that's why they're transferring wealth upwards in our society.

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): It's my pleasure to respond to the member for Sault Ste Marie and say that his 20-minute speech was a good speech, but it had nothing to do with the budget. I thought he might have wanted to talk about the fact that the provincial income tax rate in this province went from 58% of the federal rate down to 40.5% of the basic federal rate, which is the lowest personal income tax rate in all of Canada. I thought he might have wanted to talk about that and about the good news and positive effects it's had in his riding. But I know he gets his marching orders from his leader, and the marching orders are: "Don't talk about the good things happening in your riding. Let's not talk about the jobs being created there. Let's not mention the good news."

As we are discussing the budget right now, I was doing a little bit of research, looking at what had happened in previous budgets. I was looking through newspaper articles, and in all the newspaper articles across Ontario they spoke about lineups that were happening in this province with previous budgets: lineups for gasoline, lineups for cigarettes, lineups for alcohol and beer, and other sorts of lineups, because the people of Ontario believed that those governments were going to hike taxes across this province. You don't see those lineups and you haven't seen those lineups in the last three budgets brought forward by this government, because the people of Ontario know this government stands for tax cuts.

In fact, in this budget we'll see 36 tax cuts, 66 in total, and that's a far cry from the 65 tax hikes that were brought to us by the Liberal and NDP governments from 1985 to 1995, especially the NDP government, of which the member for Sault Ste Marie was a member, where we had 32 tax hikes which drove 10,000 jobs away from this province. What we've seen happen with our government is 341,000 new net private sector jobs created.

He also mentioned coffee shops and talking with people. I can tell you that the people in the coffee shops are very proud of our government. He ought to listen to what they had to say about his government. They were not very happy.

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The Acting Speaker: Member for Sault Ste Marie, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr Martin: The only thing that disappoints me more than what this government is doing, particularly to the poor and the middle-class workers in this province, is the fact that they don't understand, can't make the connections, that they don't see what they're doing, what's happening in their own communities — that they don't get it.

In my own community of Sault Ste Marie, unemployment has doubled since this government came to power. As I asked when I first started, why is it that at a time when, according to their budget, we are doing well in this province, when profits are being created, industry is working, we're hitting on all eight cylinders and the economy is booming according to all the indicators, we have to target so directly and so narrowly those among us who are most vulnerable? I don't understand that. I don't know why you have to do that. I don't know why the two go together and why it is that you're working in that way.

I said as well in my few moments this evening that there is another vision, another way of doing things, that there isn't only one alternative. I mentioned the statement by the Catholic bishops in 1983, *Ethical Reflections and Political Choices*. In that statement they very clearly suggest a number of short-term economic strategies as alternative approaches more in keeping with gospel values: Give priority to the fight against unemployment while not ignoring inflation; stem the rate of inflation equitably, not by putting the burden on low-income people; develop an industrial strategy to create real permanent employment in local communities; involve local communities in plans of coordinated action.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Barbara Fisher (Bruce): I am pleased to have the opportunity to address the House tonight with regard to the 1998 budget, presented in this House just one week ago. We know that Ontario has turned the corner. In 1995 the people of Ontario elected this government with the clear mandate to reduce and eventually eliminate the deficit, and we're well on our way to doing that; to create a climate in Ontario where jobs and prosperity are available equally and to all people; to maintain the quality of life we enjoy in Ontario; and to ensure a healthy and secure future for our children.

Over the past three years we have made the necessary changes and have seen significant progress in the reduction of the deficit and the development of fiscal policies which have revitalized the economy of Ontario. We are now moving into a new phase of our mandate. All Ontarians have worked hard and shared in the difficult sacrifices which were necessary to restore the balance to the province's finances.

The 1998 Ontario budget is a welcome sign that the changes we have made are worth it. We all recognize that they haven't been easy, but we have tackled them and achieved because of them. We are now seeing the benefits.

Ontario's economy created 265,000 net new private sector jobs between February 1997 and February 1998. As a result, our unemployment rate fell again in March, to 7.4%. In my own riding of Bruce, the unemployment rate has continued to drop from 7.5% in 1994 to 6.6% in 1996.

Taxes in Ontario are falling. The government has cut taxes 30 times since 1995. The 1998 budget, presented last week in this House, proposes to cut them a further 36 times. Ontario leads the way in cutting taxes to help create jobs. In Bruce county, personal income tax cuts alone will amount to \$22.5 million when fully implemented. It has been clearly proven that tax cuts increase domestic consumption. The deficit has fallen from \$11.3 billion when we took office to \$5.2 billion, which is \$1.4 billion ahead of the target we set in last year's budget. This year's deficit is down to \$4.2 billion. Our plan will ensure that the deficit is eliminated by the year 2000-2001.

While budgets are full of numbers, it is important to remember, as my colleague from Durham East has said, that budgets are really about people and their priorities. In my riding of Bruce, our economic future is facing a significant challenge, quite unlike some of the other ridings within Ontario today. The announcement by Ontario Hydro to lay up the Bruce A generating station came as a severe blow to the people of Bruce, who have depended upon Ontario Hydro to provide a stable and strong economic base. The potential loss of jobs to our area, ranging from 860 to 1,725, depending upon how severe this decision of Ontario Hydro is — and that includes Bruce and Grey and Huron and Perth and even some other surrounding areas — will significantly affect the local economy.

However, I strongly believe that this is the time for us in that area, in Bruce especially, to grasp an opportunity

for economic diversification in the Bruce. We have tried many times in the past, but have been unsuccessful in having the type of partnership we need to have with that single industry, Ontario Hydro, to make that come to success. I hope now is the time for that to change.

There has never been a better climate in Ontario to stimulate new business growth. Interest rates are low and investment interest is high. Opportunities exist for redevelopment of the tourism industry. Several tourism marketing partners in Bruce and Grey have recently joined forces to promote Ontario's Sunshine Coast. This initiative will promote the tremendous tourism opportunities along the shores of Lake Huron, the Bruce Peninsula and the Georgian Bay triangle. The lay-up of Bruce A also creates an opportunity for public-private partnerships with Ontario Hydro and other industries such as those located in the Bruce Energy Centre.

As a government, we will be continuing to introduce competition into the electricity industry. From our perspective in my riding, that can't come soon enough. This will open the doors for private business to take a good hard look at such excellent sites as the BNPD site. Already, interest by British Energy and a more recent interest by the partnership of Contor and the Power Workers' Union are being considered. We know that many more out there have expressed an interest and look forward to consideration of those in the near future. Given the strong economy in the province today, I am confident that the Bruce community will not only adjust in the short term but will thrive in the long term when single-industry dependence will be something of a distant memory.

The agrifood industry in Ontario and in Bruce county is healthy and strong. We must build on this and expand it even further. I was pleased to be appointed parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs just about one year ago now and to be part of the new program development over the past year.

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture has indicated that the 1998 budget shows our government is not committed to agriculture. While it is true that the budget does not include everything the OFA had discussed and wanted from us, I believe that over the past three years this government has made very significant improvements in the agrifood sector. We reversed the trend developed by the previous government of cutting the OMAFRA budget. It is on the rise again, increasing it from \$291 million last fiscal year to \$340 million projected for fiscal year end 1998-99.

In the throne speech, we promised to act on the recommendations of the Rural Youth Advisory Panel. In the 1998 budget we promised \$35 million in new money for a four-year rural youth job strategy. This is in addition, by the way, to a \$30-million announcement last April with regard to the rural jobs strategy fund. That fund has had significant uptake, approval being presented through committee to the minister over the short term. We are expecting many projects, province-wide, to take place.

The agrifood sector will benefit from lower taxes, deficit reductions, infrastructure spending and Ontario's im-

proved business climate. Working with the Ontario farmers over the past 12 months, we have brought the Act to protect Farming and Food Production, Bill 146, from discussion paper to third reading here just last week in one of the evening sessions. We have developed a \$30-million rural jobs strategy fund. We have extended the sales tax rebate on farm building materials for a third year; this has saved Ontario farmers close to \$9 million over the past two years. We have launched a summer job fund for rural students; already more than 1,000 positions have been secured for our rural youth. We have invested \$40 million in agrifood research, more than the provinces of Quebec and Alberta combined. We have reformed the farm tax system, something the other governments weren't brave enough to do; it was easier to put it off. We reformed the farm tax system so that the farmers don't have to wait for a rebate. They have permanent knowledge that that mixup of education taxation with farm credits, in other words, is gone for good, and that the OMAFRA budget is no longer artificially inflated.

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With regard to education — the students of Kincardine district, Saugeen district, Sacred Heart, Bruce Peninsula district, Chesley district, Walkerton district, and Wiarton district — all the secondary school systems within the riding that I represent — deserve the same preparation for a lifetime of success as students in Alberta, Japan, Germany, New Brunswick, or almost anywhere else you can name in the world. Such was not the opportunity under the lack of funding formula by previous governments. Our budget has not forgotten thousands of young people who want to continue their education at a college or university.

A new Canada-Ontario millennium fund for students will combine federal and Ontario student loan spending to invest more than \$9 billion in student assistance over 10 years. I heard members earlier talking about a longer-term plan. I think everybody can accept the fact that the short-term, knee-jerk reactions of the past to address today's problems weren't good for the long-term benefit of this province. While we are developing and presenting our plan before the province of Ontario today, there is a long-term vision. Tomorrow does matter, tomorrow being some 20 years out or better.

The Learning Opportunities Task Force will soon be reporting on ways to help students with learning disabilities attend college and university.

The government is moving into the next phase of our plan to convert welfare into work. More than a quarter of a million Ontarians are no longer dependent on welfare. In Bruce county, the Ontario Works program has been, and continues to be, a success. The number of general welfare assistance clients has dropped from 13,783 in 1994 to 8,553 in 1997. This is a reduction of almost 38%. At this time in Bruce county, 1,446 people are participating in the Ontario Works program.

This budget continues to offer a hand up to Ontarians who want to move from welfare to work. It includes a \$9.5-billion workplace training and employment plan; a \$25-million Learning, Earning and Parenting program to

help single parents on welfare finish school; and a new Ontario child care supplement up to \$1,020 per child under the age of seven for modest-income families.

With regard to health care, during our consultations with Ontarians over the past months, it has been made clear that Ontarians are concerned about health care. In terms of the people's voices that were heard in our riding, the rural Ontario health policy changes have been made because the government did listen. My colleagues have outlined in detail over the past week the additional funding for health care, which includes long-term-care beds, emergency services, community continuing care needs, and children with disabilities. Bruce and Grey counties will receive an additional \$11.2 million for expansion of long-term care and community services.

In this budget, we have reiterated our commitment to support Ontarians concerned about community safety. I wish Mr Runciman were here tonight to hear this, as it's because of his good work of the past couple of years that this is now before us in a very proactive and positive way and we're moving forward with protection to persons.

As part of the government's five-year, \$150-million commitment to enhance community safety, two initiatives have already been announced: Up to 1,000 new police officers will be hired in partnership with municipalities, and 115 OPP police cadets will be hired over the next 18 months to perform operational service support duties.

I recently had the pleasure of attending a retirement function for Staff Sergeant Al Neville of the Kincardine-Walkerton OPP detachment, who has retired after 30 years of service to the province and to the community. It is our responsibility to ensure that a lifetime of effort of peace officers such as Staff Sergeant Neville is not wasted. The men and women who protect us also look to government to provide the legislative framework and programs required to do their jobs.

The 1998 Ontario budget renews our pledge to the people of this province. Ontarians agree with the basics of what we're doing. Ontarians have also given us some very good advice on how we could do better on the specifics. We have heard that advice and we will use it as we move forward. Let us now continue to build on the progress we've made and make Ontario the cream of the Canadian crop and a leader in the world.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): I note with some regret that the member is so anxious to support her government that she's bought the spin lines they offer without asking some of the critical questions.

She knows particularly that there is a \$9-billion new millennium scholarship fund contained within the budget. I wonder if she's been made aware of the fact that any new money in the new millennium scholarship fund came from the federal government and that it is their millennium scholarship fund this government is trying to hitch to in order to say it's increasing its funding for student assistance when there is no new money, not a single, solitary cent of new provincial government money, in this so-called new student assistance fund. In fact, the assistant

deputy minister of education has informed student groups that they intend to decrease the spending for student assistance between now and the year 2000. They intend to take it down to about \$410 million, a decrease of over \$100 million. That is this government's idea of a new student assistance fund.

I wonder whether the member opposite would want to ask the Minister of Education, when he likes to talk about the fact that their government is spending more on student assistance than any previous government, whether it is true that this government has made university and college education so unaffordable for students — they have to pay more, they have to borrow more and they can't pay their debt at the end of graduation because their debt is so high — that the government has been forced to double what it covers in loan default payments, which is why that budget for student assistance looks high.

I wonder if she would like to know that the \$300 million in additional new assistance that the Minister of Finance talked about in answering questions on the budget is actually the old money that was given for loan forgiveness which has been rolled into a new program that they want to call a grants program. There's no new money in it. It is simply a program with a new name, and it still sanctions government-supported loans and debts of \$7,000 a year, which makes a debt of \$28,000 for an undergraduate degree. And now we have deregulation on top of that.

1950

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I want to say to the member for Bruce that she amazes me when she gets up and talks about the area that I know very well and talks about that area as though everybody's happy, everybody's smiling, everything's great. She knows very well that's not the case. She knows that there are many, many apprehensive people who do not believe that this budget holds very much future for them, the people whose property taxes have risen dramatically because of this government's download, the people who depend on health care and don't know what the final decisions are going to be about the availability of health care in that rural area, the people who don't know what the future brings in terms of their children being able to go to university or college to build the skills they should have.

You make it sound as though it's a county that has no qualms about what you as a government have done to their future, to their social services, to their confidence and their stability. You know that's not the case, because I know you go home, I know you're there, and I know what you hear from people.

It is a very difficult thing to sit and keep a straight face when you go on using, as my colleague from Port Arthur said, the spin lines you've been handed, because they won't play on the main street of Kincardine or Wiarton. People know the reality of their lives and they don't trust this government to bring prosperity to them. They know and they hear from another member a very different story about what the reality is for them and they know that it rings much truer than the words from the member for Bruce.

Mr O'Toole: Indeed it's an honour and a privilege to respond to the member for Bruce's comments. I want to assure the people watching and the members here and all the people in the gallery tonight that there is no harder-working member in this House. I sat with her on the select committee on the review of Ontario Hydro Nuclear and know her commitment to her riding.

The member for Renfrew North today challenged the Minister of Finance with respect to the extraordinary write-off by Ontario Hydro this past fiscal year of \$6 billion. I agree with many of the points he was making. But the member for Bruce is going through that. She's living through the loss of jobs of her constituents. I can tell you, you can read the passion. Watch her face, and you'll know what she means.

There is much this government is doing to help small business. She's talking about diversification, with the Bruce alternative power group that's trying to work. Our government over the next eight years is going to reduce by 50% the small business corporation tax. Think of this as a job creation tool. Think of the reduction of the employer health tax, a Liberal tax — we're eliminating it. We're challenged with the job of eliminating the Liberal taxes. Imagine 33 tax increases. When you think of the word "Liberal," you think of tax increases.

Our government is trying to work with the private sector, specifically small business. But what I really think of most is the hardworking family. I look at the \$140 million that's being added to provide assistance for families with children under the age of seven, about \$1,000 per child of tax relief. I think we're trying to help small business and families.

Mr Crozier: I would never question the hard work of this member because I think she shares the hard work that a lot of us do. But I say to the member for Bruce, don't insult the intelligence and the integrity of 37 farm organizations in this province that know you've decreased the agricultural budget. You can't count the community reinvestment fund as agriculture spending; that's municipal. You can't count ice storm spending as agriculture; that's not a program. You can't take credit for those.

When you tell them that you haven't decreased the agriculture budget, let me tell the member for Bruce, I have a list here of \$85 million in reductions, not the least of which is the cancellation of the Niagara tender fruit lands program, \$2.5 million; cuts to field services, \$2 million; cuts to Foodland Ontario marketing program, marketing our great agricultural products here and abroad, \$1 million; cuts to the agriculture investment strategy program, \$1.5 million; cuts to the tile drainage program, \$1.5 million; cuts to the University of Guelph research programs, \$2 million; the labour adjustment announcement, \$1.53 million in cuts; restructuring of agricultural programs, including field office closures, GRIP and NISA; cuts to the international marketing program, \$8.3 million; eliminating ministry services, including requiring commodity groups to pay for administration, grading, enforcement and regulation, cuts to laboratory services, \$31.3 million. The member for Bruce knows they've cut \$85 million.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Bruce, you have two minutes.

Mrs Fisher: I appreciate the input from the opposition members, but it never ceases to amaze me that they just don't get it. They've had three years to figure out that tax increases and increased social spending don't work. They cannot figure that out.

I'd like to talk for a moment about my riding of Bruce as it relates to Ontario Hydro. A member opposite a few minutes ago said, "Talk about Kincardine, talk about the closures that we anticipate, talk about the job losses," almost in glee. He then mentioned the fact that a few years ago only, I was one of the community leaders, leading the community to their doors, his specifically, asking for assistance and for help, an awareness of what might happen if the nuclear program of our community failed. We got nothing. I got a closed door.

Mr Wildman: What do you get now?

Mrs Fisher: A lot more, thank you, sir.

Everybody recognizes that Ontario Hydro has a problem, but I will tell you one thing: Don't attribute it to the residents of the Bruce; attribute it to the records of past governments that interfered politically with the decision-making and how that has caused the grief and the debts we're experiencing today. Our community, to the honourable member, will rise to face this problem once again. We faced 708 job losses in my community because of that same member. Prior to that, somebody else hired a —

Mr Wildman: How many now?

Mrs Fisher: How many now? Thanks to everybody, 750, 860, potentially 1,725. But I will challenge you, and this government will stand to the challenge, because we're doing it now, finding a way to relieve that problem because of the mess in reduction in spending and reduction in commitments by management. We will recover the situation.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): It's a pleasure for me to comment ever so briefly on the budget and the impact of the budget on northern Ontario. Let me start off, though, by complimenting the government. I'm going to compliment the government on the very slick packaging they have put together with this budget. It's very similar to the packaging on this particular piece that the member for St Catharines has talked about. What angers the member for St Catharines and our caucus is that this packaging is very self-serving. But it's slick: I want you to understand and I'm going to start off this debate by telling you that it's slick advertising. The fluff is nice, but what's inside the fluff certainly is not nice and it's especially not nice to the people of northern Ontario.

I was talking to a few of the Conservatives in Sudbury on the weekend because I wanted their reaction to the budget. They said, I think half in jest, that they wonder if Mike or Ernie has somebody in the printing business or in the layout business because of the amount of money this government is spending on packaging what, if it were so good, would be an easy sell.

Mr Wildman: You're not talking about Jim Gordon, are you?

Mr Bartolucci: No, I wasn't talking to Jim Gordon, as the member for Algoma has asked. He was out of town. But he would probably say the same thing, because he has criticized the government on so many occasions.

What is of concern to most of the people in Sudbury, in northern Ontario, is the lack of time that you've given the people of northern Ontario, that you've given the economy of northern Ontario, that you've given the concerns of northern Ontario and the strategies that are necessary to ensure that northern Ontario becomes a very viable and vibrant energy place to grow, to live and to do business in. That's not happening right now. It's as simple as that.

2000

The packaging of the budget is neat, the packaging of Mike Harris is neat, but I think the people of northern Ontario understand that it's basically fluff and are not going to be fooled by it.

I do want to talk, though, about last year's budget for a second because I believe it has an impact on the budget that was presented last week. In particular, I want to talk about the northern vehicle registration tax. You will know all about this tax because it was the only new tax that Mike Harris imposed on the people of Ontario last year. Mike Harris prides himself as the Taxfighter. I've heard various members say that tonight, whether they're in order or out of order, stand up and say, "My leader, our leader, the Premier of the province, is the Taxfighter," when in reality Mike Harris, the Premier, is the imposer of taxes.

Interjections.

Mr Bartolucci: They groan across the way, but the reality is that in the last budget the only new tax imposed was a tax imposed on the people of northern Ontario. He called it the northern vehicle registration tax. Across the way, they say it's a fee. Well, Mike Harris said, in a quote, "There is no difference between a user fee and a tax." So I must admit that I too am convinced when Mike Harris says a user fee is nothing else but a tax. Mike Harris introduced and implemented the only new tax in last year's budget on northern Ontario residents and it was called the northern vehicle registration tax.

Obviously there was an outcry from the people of northern Ontario. They were upset, as indeed they should be, when you consider that we have a Premier who supposedly is from northern Ontario, we have a finance minister who supposedly is from northern Ontario. These two individuals are supposed to understand the complexities of northern Ontario. We have this new tax imposed on northerners, this new tax that really doesn't understand the complexities of life in the north and the extra costs of operating a vehicle in northern Ontario.

For some of us who live in southern Ontario, southwestern Ontario or even eastern Ontario, that may seem to be a very small item, but let me tell you, when the cumulative effect of that takes place what we have is an enormous amount of money being drawn out of northern Ontario. One estimate is \$15 million. In reality, it's much higher than that.

The people of northern Ontario became very angry and they asked the members in the Liberal caucus from northern Ontario how can they best put their views forward. We said, "Certainly through your members, regardless of what party they're in, but also, you might want to let Mike Harris know that you're not happy that Mike Harris, the Taxfighter, imposed this new tax on northern Ontario residents." So they started a postcard campaign and, lo and behold, the government has received thousands upon thousands upon thousands of postcards from people in northern Ontario saying: "This new tax is unacceptable. Please withdraw this new tax in your next budget. This new tax is unfair. Please withdraw this new tax in your next budget. This new tax doesn't reflect the extra cost of operating a vehicle in northern Ontario, Mr Premier. Please withdraw this new tax in your next budget."

I heard about this kinder and softer and gentler Mike Harris, the one who listens and hears, not just hears and never listens, or listens and never hears, but the speech from the throne gave this new caricature a new image. It is the Mike Harris who listens, who hears, who cares, who is kinder, who is gentler.

You know what? I thought: "I'm a pretty open-minded individual. I think I'll give him the benefit of the doubt. Maybe he will have listened and heard what the people of northern Ontario said in thousands upon thousands upon thousands of postcards to the Premier and the finance minister when they were saying, 'Mike Harris, if you hear us, you'll withdraw this northern vehicle registration tax,' the only new tax imposed on people in northern Ontario in last year's budget." But unfortunately Mike Harris didn't listen and we see with the budget this year that the northern vehicle registration tax is still in place, that this gouging of northern Ontario residents is still in place, that this lack of understanding about the extra cost of operating a vehicle in northern Ontario is still in place.

I'm a little disappointed. I'm not disgusted any longer, I'm not bewildered, but you know what? I am disappointed. I honestly thought that after two and a half years, almost three years, the government had understood that there is a difference between northern Ontario and the rest of Ontario; that an area that occupies approximately 87% of the total land mass and has approximately 10% of the population is going to have different needs than the rest of Ontario. But this budget does nothing to address the individual needs of the people in northern Ontario.

I looked through this budget very, very carefully. When I was having a post-mortem on the budget with the people from my riding, I wanted to ensure that I was very, very fair with the government and put forth what I considered to be an objective rather than a subjective point of view. I must tell the members across the way on the government side that there is nothing in this budget, absolutely nothing, that northern Ontario residents can be optimistic about.

I look at the title and I see "Jobs for the Future, Today." For northern Ontario it should be, "No Jobs Today; A Very Poor Future." If you were going to put a byline on

this budget, that's what you would have to say this budget reflects for the people in northern Ontario.

Mr Baird: Rick always does look at the positive side of things.

Mr Bartolucci: In order to make a statement like the member for Nepean is making you have to be able to back it up with some facts. Otherwise you shouldn't make the statement.

Let's look at some of the facts that are real facts. I want to go to the Labour Market News bulletin. It is certainly based on all the criteria, all the numbers and all the facts found in northern Ontario. It's done by economists and it gives a good synopsis of what's happening in northern Ontario. Although there are some numbers attached to this — and I apologize to the people who may be watching out there because numbers sometimes are hard to follow — I believe the numbers are important to show not only the government members but anyone who may be listening and watching out there that the new budget, the sickly packaged 1998 Ontario budget is not working for the people of northern Ontario.

2010

First of all I want to talk about Ontario. You will know that in February 1998 there was a 7.9% unemployment rate. If everything is going so well, the unemployment rate should be dropping. But in March 1998 the unemployment rate went up to 8.2%. Let's see how that reflects on Sudbury. I believe the 8.2% is an important number. In March 1997, one year ago, there was a 10% unemployment rate in Sudbury. The budget was presented. In February 1998, there was an 11.1% unemployment rate. With the great Tory policies we have in the budget, the unemployment rate grew by 1.1%. Let's deal with March 1998, because maybe there was a change, maybe there was some hope for northern Ontario residents. If we look at the unemployment rate, we find that has gone up to 12.1%. I tell the members across the way that something is wrong because the unemployment rate in Sudbury has steadily climbed over the course of the last year and a half.

But maybe Sudbury is a little different than the rest of northern Ontario. Let's go to northeastern Ontario.

Mr Wildman: It's the same in the Sault.

Mr Bartolucci: We'll get to the Sault in a second, member for Algoma.

In northeastern Ontario we see it was 12.1% in April 1997. In March 1998, the unemployment rate went up to 13.3%. If that isn't bad enough, the unemployment rate for the month of April, the month we've just finished, was 13.4%. That's northeastern Ontario.

Let's go to northern Ontario, because northern Ontario covers northeastern and northwestern Ontario. We on this side of the House know that. We found out last Thursday that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing isn't quite sure where northeastern Ontario is and where northwestern Ontario is. We want to assure him tonight that northeastern and northwestern Ontario are both in northern Ontario.

Let's look at the numbers for northern Ontario. We see that the numbers for northern Ontario are rather interesting as well, because in April 1997 there was an 11.8%

unemployment rate. In March 1998, there was a 13% unemployment rate, and last month alone, there was a 13.2% unemployment rate. I suggest to you that Sudbury is no different than any other area in northeastern Ontario, Sudbury is no different than any other area in northern Ontario.

Let me talk for a second about Sault Ste Marie. Recently I was part of a presentation that dealt with what's happening to the construction industry in Sault Ste Marie. There's big concern up there. I know the member for Brampton North, who has very close relatives up there, knows there is concern on the part of his family, his friends and the people of Sault Ste Marie with regard to the construction industry and the unemployment rate. I should tell you that the unemployment rate in Sault Ste Marie in March 1998 was 19.6%. That's more than double the average in Ontario. That is unacceptable. It's unacceptable in Sault Ste Marie; it's unacceptable in Sudbury; it's unacceptable in Thunder Bay; it's unacceptable in Kenora; it's unacceptable in Algoma-Manitoulin; it's unacceptable in Algoma; it's unacceptable in Timmins and in Timiskaming; in fact, it's completely unacceptable.

I have to tell the government members, and I hope they're listening, that the reality is that your fiscal policies in northern Ontario are not working.

Mr Baird: Are they working in southern Ontario?

Mr Bartolucci: I'm sure someone should be giving the member for Nepean his soother, because the member for Nepean is almost out of control and obviously hasn't had his daily feeding.

Let me tell you, the policies of this government should be working for all Ontarians. That's what the Premier says when he stands up, that's what the finance minister says when he stands up and that's what the members across the way have been saying since this budget debate began: "More jobs are being created. There is more growth in Ontario."

Statisticians, economists, those who study the market will tell you it is not working in northern Ontario. You might want to be concerned about that, because the Common Sense Revolution is a disaster for the people in northeastern Ontario and for the people in northwestern Ontario.

Well, then, we should have some type of strategy in place to ensure that this erosion of northern Ontario stops. The solution is quite simple: Start supplying some stimulus to the economy in northern Ontario. Start understanding that northern Ontario requires special consideration. Start understanding that a part of northern Ontario's growth is based on government jobs, that every time you take a government job away from a city, a town or a village in northern Ontario, what you are doing is hurting the economy of that city, town or village. Regardless of what you might want to say as a total package, the budget that was presented by your government, by the Premier and by the finance minister, is not in the best interests of the people of northern Ontario.

We had a very good history lesson earlier on from the member for Sault Ste Marie, and I only wish more people

had spent a little bit of time listening to the sincerity of that presentation. But if you want to look at history, do understand that the wealth of Ontario first started because of the natural resources industries that are based in northern Ontario, those being mining and forestry. So when you stand up here and say, "Jobs for the Future, Today," I want you to understand that your plan is not creating jobs for the future, today; your plan, your budget, is creating unemployment in northern Ontario.

We as opposition members cannot, must not and will not allow you to do that without a very vocal opposition. I suggest to you that there are members here on this side of the House who would be very eager to sit down with the government to devise a strategy for northern Ontario that works, because I'll tell you and statistics will tell you that this budget doesn't do it. You're treating northern Ontario with a great deal of disrespect, and that we will remember at the next election.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Comments and questions?

Mr Pouliot: I too listened intently to the remarks by the member for Sudbury. If you live up north, he's quite right, you didn't see it in the Common Sense Revolution, but we now have an extra sticker, \$37 per annum per vehicle in northern Ontario. Yet you would know that we pay so much at the pump. This was going to be a bit of a tradeoff. It was symbolic, and there were a few dollars attached to it.

We pay more for property taxes because of the down-loading, more user fees, again because of the government. It's not reflected in the budget speech.

Let's talk about the budget speech. Page 11: "We are investing more than \$820 million in 1998-99 to upgrade Ontario's highways, including our northern highway network." That's the budget speech. The revelation, the truth, is in the budget book, page 55: Transportation — that's capital, that's mortar — \$849 million for 1998-99. That's \$301 million less than the previous year and 50% of what was spent when we were the government during a recession. So talk to me about improving the quality of life through highways.

The same can be said of many ministries: Community and Social Services, \$31 million to \$20 million. The environment: At one time, 1994-95, \$271 million; last year, \$100 million; this year, \$51 million.

They're turning their back. They're not spending the money on capital expenditures, not spending the money on programs, on operating expenses, and yet they're borrowing every cent every day of every year to supplement the tax cut.

2020

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): I'm pleased to respond briefly to the comments from the member for Sudbury, who I guess in his zeal to try and suggest to his voters, pander to their special interests up there, would have us believe they don't share the same common interest as every other Ontarian, that they won't benefit from the extraordinary increase in growth in this province, the extraordinary increase in investment, the 70,000 new

housing starts in the month of March, record car sales, the highest level of consumer confidence in the history of Ontario, the highest level of business confidence in over 10 years.

I guess I'd have to ask, if his riding alone isn't seeing all of that, how is that a reflection on the member and his ability to make sure that what the rest of the province is seeing as extraordinary growth, leading all of Canada, also applies in the riding of Sudbury?

I know that there have been cuts to 66 taxes now, contrasted to the 65 tax increases in your five years and the five years of the NDP.

I'm sure that every business in your riding will appreciate the elimination of the employer health tax for the smallest 88% of all businesses. I'm sure they'll appreciate the stimulus that putting more dollars in people's pockets has made.

But let's talk about northern initiatives. Let's talk about rebuilding Highway 11 and Highway 69 and the Trans-Canada that your two governments neglected to the point that it was a cowpath. I was ashamed in 1994 to drive from Sudbury to Sault Ste Marie. I was ashamed of what the province of Ontario had allowed its infrastructure to deteriorate to.

The bottom line is that we've restored the northern heritage fund. We've restored full funding to road projects, as well as stimulating all this other growth.

Maybe the member from Sudbury-OECTA should reflect on those benefits as well.

Mr Miclash: I can assure the member for Scarborough East that the diatribe is not selling in northern Ontario, in northwestern Ontario. Every time you get up, we seem to raise a point in the polls in northern Ontario, and I have to agree with that.

The member for Sudbury indicated about the postcard campaign. It was a campaign that was responded to by hundreds and hundreds of my constituents as well to indicate that the Mike Harris government does not recognize the difference of northern Ontario when it comes to our highways, our lack of a public transportation system, our higher gas prices. At one time a government did recognize that in terms of lifting the vehicle registration fee from northern drivers. Now we've had Mike Harris just reintroduce that vehicle registration fee to indicate to us that he in no way recognizes the uniqueness of what we in the north and northern Ontario face.

The member indicated the higher rates of unemployment in northern Ontario, again something this government just refuses to recognize. It refuses to recognize that northern Ontario is not benefiting as we have across the rest of the province and that we do face such things as higher unemployment rates.

Just the other morning during the private members' business we had the member for Oxford get up and read a good number of headlines regarding the budget. As I indicated to him, unfortunately he didn't read the northern press, because he would never have found those headlines regarding the budget in any part of northern Ontario, again feeling very left out when it comes to this government

making decisions, this government taking a look at how northerners are surviving in this province.

Again, I would just like to congratulate the member for Sudbury for pointing out some of these very realistic facts that we face as northern members in northern Ontario.

Mr Wildman: I want to congratulate the member for Sudbury for raising a large number of issues that relate specifically to the problems in northern Ontario. I want to point out that in the responses this evening we have seen, unfortunately, the complete lack of understanding on the part of the government members across the way of the situation in northern Ontario.

The fact is this: There is higher unemployment now in northern Ontario than there was when this government came into power. The fact is that in Sault Ste Marie, as the member for Sudbury mentioned, there is double the unemployment rate of the whole province.

We all know that when this party was in government, we responded to the concerns and the problems in the recession in Sault Ste Marie, in Kapuskasing and in other areas by assisting in restructuring and preserving jobs. This government does not believe in that. As a matter of fact, Mr Long, an adviser to the Premier, said that if they had been the government in 1992, there would have been no Algoma Steel deal. He made it quite clear. I congratulate him for being honest, but the fact is that there would have been 5,000 people out of work in Sault Ste Marie, direct jobs, and you can imagine the spinoff that would have produced.

The other reason that unemployment has increased substantially since this government came to power in northern Ontario is the cuts to the public sector, the cuts to transportation, natural resources. Natural resources has gone from \$478 million in 1994-95 to \$388 million in operating; it has gone from \$54 million in capital to \$29 million. That is most obvious in the small communities in northern Ontario. The cuts to natural resources, MTO and other public services have caused the increasing unemployment rate in northern Ontario, and the government across the way doesn't understand.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Sudbury has two minutes to respond.

Mr Bartolucci: I'd like to thank the members for Nipigon, Kenora and Algoma for your intelligence in trying to respond to my presentation, and to respond to the member for Scarborough East on his two-minute diatribe.

If the member for Scarborough East would keep his ears open and his mouth shut during my presentation, he might know that I was speaking about northern Ontario, not only Sudbury. Let's see. He talked about housing starts: down 64% in Sault Ste Marie. He talked about highway reconstruction and Highway 69: cancelled the environmental assessment. He talked about the highway between Sudbury and the Sault: no construction, no reconstruction, no upgrading over the course of the last two and a half years.

Let's talk about special interests. You want to believe there are special interests in northern Ontario. We've got to ensure —

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): That is a lie. That is an outright lie.

The Acting Speaker: Member from Brampton, take your seat, please.

Mr Wildman: On a point of order, Speaker: I recognize your difficulty in that the member for Brampton North was not in his seat. You called him to order and asked him to take his seat, but I distinctly heard the member accuse another honourable member in this House of a falsehood.

The Acting Speaker: Does the member for Brampton North wish to withdraw?

Mr Spina: I withdraw the comment, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The member for Sudbury, continue, please.

Mr Bartolucci: He will know that any construction that took place between the Sault and Sudbury was already in place and it was simple resurfacing.

Let me tell you as well that the member for Scarborough East, when he comes to northern Ontario and visits northern Ontario —

Mr Gilchrist: Almost every month.

Mr Bartolucci: — is quoted in the paper as understanding nothing about northern Ontario, absolutely ignorant about northern Ontario. That's why northern Ontarians don't support the Conservative government.

Mr Gilchrist: When was the last time you were in Scarborough?

The Acting Speaker: Order. I would ask the members to try to address their comments through the Speaker and try to make them just a wee bit softer so they won't encourage others to react to them, if I could do that, please.

Further debate?

Mrs Boyd: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Through you to my colleagues on the other side of the House, one always knows that when the members of this government start shouting down honourable members on this side, the honourable members on this side must in fact have hit a nerve, and that's what we're seeing tonight. I must say that for a government that wants to try and portray to the people of Ontario a lot of confidence about this budget, this nonsense that is going on on the other side certainly cuts into their credibility.

I feel very strongly that all of us should look very carefully behind the glitz and the packaging of this budget to see what it really means not just today, not just this year, but for many years in the future.

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One of the ironies is that we hear this government out there trying to sell to the people of Ontario that the reason the people of Ontario are unhappy with what the government is doing is that the government isn't communicating well enough what it is doing. Frankly, that's one of the biggest laughs that has happened over the last three years, because this government has amazing ability to spin its news in the direction it wants people to believe, and it has an amazing capacity to make bold-faced statements which are completely watered down by the reality.

One of the best examples is this much-ballyhooed \$1.2 billion that they're going to put into long-term care over eight years, over at the very least one election period and probably two, making a promise that they know no government can make when they're in the third year of their term: to tie the funding to that kind of long lead time.

One of the realities is that long-term care is in desperate need now, not eight years from now. The minister has consistently refused to confirm how much money will flow in what year. Oh yes, the government may say the RFPs are out to the big contractors, to those who may build some of these facilities. That's true, the RFPs are out. That doesn't guarantee any of that money will be spent because again and again we have seen this government making an announcement, going into a process, not ever announcing who won the process, changing its mind, going back, going forth, and what do we find at the end? Not one cent spent.

That has happened again and again, and not just in the health ministry. The Ministry of Community and Social Services: There is this much-ballyhooed \$40 million for child care that has been announced the first year, reannounced the second year, and now reannounced and folded in with federal money to try and make an impression in the third year.

I think most people who are political creatures out there really look at this as an election budget. It is very reminiscent, actually, of the Liberals' budget in 1989-90, very reminiscent of what they were telling the people of Ontario was the financial situation and their projections into the future. One of the things that is very clear about that is that a lot of things weren't counted and lot of things were flowed in a different way than they were announced. That is what we're seeing in this budget.

I'm looking here at a whole lot of funds that have no real substance to them. There's a contingency fund, for example, under Management Board Secretariat of \$830 million; a special circumstance fund, also under Management Board, \$77 million. Health care restructuring: They tell us they spent \$970 million in 1996-97 and \$880 million in 1997-98, when everyone knows the only dollars that were flowed out of that restructuring fund so far have been the \$154 million that was really spent to pay severance fees for all those health care workers who lost their jobs under restructuring.

It's not just, as the member for Scarborough-Agincourt suggested, an accounting system that tends to push money around from one year to another. Now you see it, now you don't. Here's the smoke, here's the mirrors, where's the money? That's very much what we're seeing, a real shell game.

One of the things this government kept saying in the first couple of years was how important it was for public services to be run like businesses. One of the first things they did was to set out a business plan for this and a business plan for that, and to demand that school boards, municipalities and agencies getting government money had a business plan. Quite frankly, they don't make the same demand of themselves. They pay little attention to

concrete business plans when it doesn't suit their political desire.

Let me give you an example. It's one of those examples we really need to hear about in terms of this government's claims about what it is doing versus the reality of what it is doing. The much-ballyhooed Health Services Restructuring Commission, this supposedly arm's-length body, this wonderful commission set up by Bill 26, was to go through the province and rationalize health care services. The government said, "Oh no, it's not us who are closing hospitals." Remember the Premier day after day standing there saying, "It's not us who are closing hospitals; it's the commission that's closing hospitals"? Right?

Mr Preston: You guys closed beds.

Mrs Boyd: The reality of the situation for thousands and thousands of people in this province is that there has been a substantial alteration in the availability of health care services. There had been substantial change even before the final reports of that health restructuring commission. Why? Because in the past two budgets this government has withdrawn over \$650 million from hospitals while requiring them to do this massive restructuring.

Mr Preston: We reinvested it.

Mrs Boyd: The person who continues to heckle from the other side says, "We reinvested that money," but every analysis of the public accounts shows that money has not yet been reinvested. The \$170 million that was announced and announced and announced over the last three years to go into long-term care, into home care, was a farce. It was not spent; in fact, \$5 million less was spent the first year and only about \$100 million of that over the whole term.

Mr Preston: Chicken feed.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Brant-Haldimand, come to order.

Mrs Boyd: Chicken feed is right, chicken feed to what is needed and what the Health Services Restructuring Commission has said is needed in absolutely every community.

One would have assumed that if this so-called arm's-length commission was doing this work and making these orders to these hospitals, we would see the health ministry respecting the advice they gave them about restructuring in other sectors, but that hasn't proved to be the case at all. Communities all over this province are feeling the effects of having those millions of dollars taken out of the health services in their communities and not reinvested.

It is scant comfort to those people when the government says, "Oh, that's all right, because some time over the next eight years we're going to put \$1.2 billion back." It doesn't help the seniors who are not getting the services they need. It doesn't help the disabled who are not getting the services they need. It doesn't help the people who are being released from hospital, sicker and quicker, to go home and find no services available in their communities, and that's what's happening.

The government comes out with these grandiose statements about how they are spending more in health care than any other government has ever spent, and then of course they get caught on it, because in 1992-93 it was

\$1,668 per person and in your budget document you claim that the \$1,639 per person you are spending now is the most. You may not have much respect for the public education system, but it's amazing how the people of Ontario actually learned to add and subtract. When they actually hear the numbers and know the numbers don't add up, they get a little suspicious. The penny may not have dropped all the way yet, but I think you will find that it does.

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The other issue around this great restructuring of health care is that it is a highly corporatized effort. What is happening is that those hospitals that were community-based, that had community input and were truly responsive to their communities have gradually lost that ability to govern themselves. We've seen the closures of hospitals.

Ottawa is a good example where the community-based Riverside Hospital is kaput, gone, completely finished, whereas the big teaching hospitals, the huge corporate teaching hospitals get all the services, gather them unto themselves and become a huge conglomerate corporation, not community-based, not publicly accountable in the way that people in their communities expect their hospitals to be.

Just last week the Prince Edward County hospital, which had pleaded to maintain its community base and its community governance, was told by the restructuring commission: "No, you've got to go into an agreement with the North Hastings health care system and the Belleville hospital and the Trenton hospital. You've got to get into one corporation."

The restructuring commission was rather sensitive to the very strong moves the community had made, and in fact in their instructions to the mediator, the facilitator for this creation of a new corporation, very clearly instructed that there needed to be some local control over some issues, that there needed to be real consideration for the fact that the Prince Edward County hospital was a very important entity in a community that is somewhat isolated.

But it's not surprising, seeing what people have seen in other areas, that there is some suspicion about whether or not the facilitator will be able to ensure the integrity of the Prince Edward County hospital. After all, in Pembroke the restructuring commission ordered the facilitator to develop a plan which would see a community base to the board of the general hospital which would be inclusive of the population in that area. There are deep concerns in that Renfrew area that that broad representation that would protect the health care services people had worked to build will not happen.

Another example is the situation in Northumberland county. I'm sorry the member for Northumberland isn't here because I really would have wanted to hear his response to a situation which appears on the surface quite puzzling to most people. If we have a restructuring commission and a government that are focused on the most businesslike plan for restructuring hospitals, the interim orders of the restructuring commission are completely unintelligible. The restructuring commission, without ever

talking to the people of Port Hope, came up with a plan whereby the Cobourg hospital would be the one hospital in the area and the Port Hope hospital would be closed.

Given the larger population in Cobourg, that may not be a surprise, until you know that in business terms it was a bad choice. The Cobourg hospital is in downtown Cobourg, very hard to access, a building that was built in 1911, I believe — the core building. It has no air-conditioning in its operating rooms. It has very little head space so there's very little room to put ducting in. It's very awkward in terms of access for those who have disabilities. It has grown like Topsy and a bit higgledy-piggledy. Whereas the Port Hope hospital was built in 1964 with dollars raised in the community, very clearly a forward-thinking community that built that hospital near Highway 401, on about 40 acres of land, built it so that it could easily have all the footings in for a second storey to be added, a second storey that would have met the needs of the population of Northumberland.

I know that the politics of this, a little like the politics in Thunder Bay, are that Northumberland's Health Care Corp hopes that it can persuade the government into buying a whole new hospital. Their representations to the restructuring commission suggested it would cost only about \$10 million to refurbish the Cobourg hospital, whereas it was admitted that it would cost about \$19 million to build the second storey on the Port Hope hospital. Of course, a brand-new facility, which was what the corporation really wanted, would cost about \$41 million.

Everybody in Northumberland county would be delighted to have a brand-new, state-of-the-art hospital, whether they live in Cobourg or whether they live in Port Hope. They've accepted that there should be only one hospital and they'd all be delighted. But you know, the people of Northumberland county are pretty canny people. They're quite businesslike themselves. They say to themselves, "Why would we spend \$41 million on a brand-new hospital when for half that we could have a facility that would meet all the needs of the community, that's accredited for trauma, that has air conditioning, that is able to expand in terms of ancillary health care issues like long-term care because of the land around it?"

They wonder why the government would be even considering either of the other alternatives: a brand-new hospital or refurbishing a hospital that they all know within 10, certainly 20 years would have to be completely rebuilt anyway. Why would you put that kind of money into that sort of facility?

All over the province people are asking the whys about these decisions. They're asking why a government that keeps talking about business practices has such bad business practices itself. If you look at the family support plan debacle, was that good business practice? Obviously not. You destroy the service and then you scramble to try and build it up. I'm amused every time I see the ad appear in the paper yet again for somebody else, perhaps another 100 somebody elses, to try and deliver the services in this completely unbusinesslike Family Responsibility Office.

All over the province people are starting to say, if they're making this kind of bad choice, if what we're seeing is them scrambling to try and plug the hole in their public policy, being forced to change their minds when they are shown to have been bad business planners: "I know they were wrong about that. How can I trust that they're right, that the robust growth of the economy is somehow going to trickle down to me?" There are lots of people to whom the robust economy is not trickling down, more every day. It's very clear that this government has no sympathy for those who are losing out.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Baird: I would indicate to my colleagues in the official opposition that this party gets two responses and the best is yet to come.

I would just comment on the remarks by my colleague the member for London Centre. They certainly were thoughtful remarks on a whole series of initiatives and as they relate to the budget.

2050

She asked a series of questions that in her view come from the public, asking why we would pursue the health care policy that we pursue. I would say very directly to her that the reason we pursue that policy is that for 10 years the solution to health care funding was to close 10,000, 11,000 beds in the province. There was never the courage to close a single hospital. In my community of Ottawa-Carleton, they closed more than 800 beds over 10 years, and we had a considerable number of resources going towards administration, going towards the infrastructure that supported those beds. When she asked why, in relation to Northumberland, the government would change directions on health care policy, it's that we believe the direction the Ontario government was going in was the wrong direction. We wanted to do a demonstrably better job.

Change isn't easy. I suppose it would have been easy to do nothing, but that was indeed the policy the two previous governments had pursued. That has already freed up more than \$1 billion, \$1.2 billion for expansion of the long-term care beds, which is important.

She also discussed the way the government does business. We in this party looked at the way the previous government did business and thought that it led to less hope and less opportunity for the future of the next generation in the province. We saw the way the past two governments had done business, the way that the job creation led to the highest child poverty rate this province had ever seen. We think we can do better. We think that by encouraging the private sector to create jobs, there will be more hope and more opportunity for the future, that more jobs will be created, fewer people living in poverty, and that will be good for the people of Ontario.

We're not satisfied. We've got to redouble our efforts and work harder to do better, because as long as there is one person looking for a job in Ontario, we've got a substantial amount of work to do.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I want to comment on the fine speech of the member for London

Centre. I'm really pleased that she raised the issues of health regarding this budget. I get letter upon letter from patients who are saying that waiting lists are getting way too long. I just had a phone call from a physician in the constituency who has had to cancel clinics in a community for two months because of bureaucratic ineptitude.

The patients in my constituency are concerned about the health care policies of this government. We have seen beds closed at an alarming rate in the constituency over the past three years.

Mr Baird: What about over the past 13 years?

Mr Michael Brown: In the past three years. We used to build hospitals in my riding.

I have seen the reports from the Manitoulin Health Centre about what they're saying they will be forced to do this coming year to provide patient care. They are going to have to cut patient services directly. They have cut everything else. The next thing to go is services. That's what we hear from Elliot Lake, that's what we hear from Espanola.

Do you know what your long-term-care announcement means in the Sudbury-Manitoulin district? That means in the next two years, despite the literally hundreds of beds that have been taken out of the system as a whole, you're going to put in 30 beds. Two years from now we will have 30 additional beds if we're lucky. That will not cut it. I had a gentleman from Toronto in my office three days ago who was concerned because his sister was going to have to be moved from Espanola hospital to a Toronto nursing home. That is just unacceptable.

Mr Wildman: I want to congratulate my friend from London Centre on her thoughtful remarks, particularly as they relate to health care, and the numbers and the fact that they don't add up in the budget. She indicated and demonstrated a breadth of knowledge that is really admirable. I would raise a couple of points that her remarks stimulated me to think about.

First, the \$1.2 billion that the government touts for re-investment in long-term care is over eight years. The first beds will not come on stream until the year 2000. The government itself admits that there is a serious backlog in terms of the need for long-term care as the population ages, the need for nursing care beds in many communities across Ontario. There is an enormous backlog. As a result of that we have patients inappropriately housed in beds that should be used for other purposes. For instance, we have chronic care patients in acute care beds. That causes backups in emergency wards, and we have the horror stories we've seen in southern Ontario.

The promise of these beds over eight years raises a number of questions, particularly in our area. The question about the beds that are promised for the district of Algoma is, when will they come on stream and how will they be distributed? Will the retirement community of Elliot Lake receive the beds that it needs now? We are told that if 50 beds were established now, they would be filled in three days. That's an enormous need. When will that need be met for the retirement community of Elliot Lake?

Mr Gilchrist: I too would like to congratulate the member for London Centre. Her comments are always

thoughtful and articulate. While I disagree with some of the content, I always appreciate her sincerity in delivering them. It is a stark contrast, when I keep hearing stories about the health care issues that supposedly afflict only the opposition ridings, when I look at Scarborough and I look at the fact that Centenary hospital had three empty floors for the first 30 years of its history, now that we are in government, now that there's a new change in the approach to delivering health care and making sure that services are distributed where they're needed, every floor is filled. The two floors in Scarborough General that were empty on the day we were elected are filled as well. There's a new dialysis ward to deal with the 200 dialysis patients who never had any service in Scarborough before; there's a new MRI going into Scarborough General; there's a 288-bed expansion at Providence Centre.

The reality for the one twentieth of the province that lives in the old city of Scarborough, by any objective criteria, is that health care has gotten much, much better. People can see with their own eyes a government that cares by investing in the most modern equipment, by investing in more doctors and nurses in those specialties that see higher demand, particularly in areas like asthma, cancer and cardiac. The bottom line: We're not closing beds indiscriminately as the previous two governments did. They closed 9,000 beds. We're reinvesting the dollars we're saving by shutting down the half-empty buildings, have stopped paying for administrators and heat and light and are putting those dollars where they matter: on equipment and personnel to deal with the health care concerns of all Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker: The member for London Centre has two minutes to respond.

Mrs Boyd: The member for Scarborough East always sets himself up as such a target that it doesn't feel very good to go after him. Of course you've looked after your own riding, member for Scarborough East. But what about the people who depended on Wellesley Hospital, the people who depended on Northwestern General Hospital, Branson Hospital? What about the people at Doctors Hospital? You looked after yourself. There are lots of people who have seen their hospitals disappear.

Our party has not said that we should not be closing some of these buildings and consolidating services. There are members who know that I have been supportive of many of the changes that have happened. But when you make decisions based on politics, not on good health care business, then I get worried. When we see the Health Services Restructuring Commissions stop dead in its tracks because the member for Lambton got all upset about the Petrolia hospital and rethink the whole thing, then we know that you didn't do the kind of planning and forethought you should have done around health care restructuring. You haven't moved forward on primary care. It's one of the most serious issues for people, where they enter the system.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): This just happened now? Where were you when you were in government?

Mrs Boyd: I must say, Mr Speaker, that you appear to have lost control of at least one of your members here. I will say very clearly that the changes that needed to happen should have been thought out and planned in a sequential manner that made sense. You didn't do that. You are still allowing the OMA to block primary care reform because they're your buddies and they get all the cream out of the system.

The Acting Speaker: I just want to remind everybody that you are not my members. I would ask you to once again address your comments through the Speaker.

The Chair recognizes the member for Halton Centre.

Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre): I'd like to ask agreement to share my time with the member for Huron.

The Acting Speaker: Is it agreed? It is agreed.

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Mr Young: This budget marks a transition for Ontario away from restructuring and downsizing to managing and renewing our priorities. After 10 years of mismanagement, weak leadership, flip-flops on issues and priorities, social engineering, rampant spending of borrowed money and 65 tax increases, Ontario had a dysfunctional economy and a demoralized society. We were technically bankrupt and had been so balkanized into special interest groups by the Liberals and NDP that many Ontarians had lost their tolerance and sense of duty to each other as individuals, with every group for themselves.

Five levels of government, if you include school boards, had taxed and spent and taxed and spent Ontario into the highest-taxed jurisdiction in North America. What did that mean to the average family? It meant that over two thirds of their family income was confiscated in various and numerous taxes, disallowing them the opportunity to take responsibility for their own future.

Families with combined incomes of over \$60,000, \$80,000 and even \$100,000 were paying a mortgage, raising their children and having no way to save for their children's university education, their retirement or even a family vacation, because there was simply no money left over at the end of the month. These hardworking Ontarians were not defeated, but they were demoralized and they were depressed.

The frightening thing is that the NDP and Liberals didn't get it in 1995 during the election and they still don't get it now. Mr Hampton, the leader of the NDP, has promised to raise taxes back to where they were if his party becomes the next government. This is the politics of division and envy. It certainly doesn't appeal to the best in people.

Mr Hampton needs the people to need him to improve their quality of life. He doesn't say to Ontarians: "You can do it yourselves. You can be the best. You can earn more by working hard, by going back to school, by using your talents, by taking a chance on yourself. You can build Ontario by investing yourself and your money right here." Instead, he tells the people of Ontario: "You need me to increase taxes from your fellow citizens who have

been successful. I'll increase welfare. I'll give you more free stuff."

I heard Mr Hampton on TVO yesterday. He was criticizing our government for reducing services to those in need. This, from a former minister in a government that laid off thousands of nurses and stopped giving over 240 drugs previously given free to those in need. On the other hand, my government has increased those drugs by over 400 and we're creating thousands of new jobs for nurses in communities with a \$1.2-billion investment in long-term care.

Mr Hampton says: "I'll get more for you. I'll be your Robin Hood. I'll take from the rich and give to the poor." But what is "rich" to Mr Hampton? Any family that earns over \$60,000 a year. Mr Hampton thinks it's greedy to earn more than \$60,000 a year in a family.

We've seen what happens when you convince people that they'll never succeed and tax and tax those who are succeeding. In five years under the NDP there was not one new job created. In fact, we went backwards.

The Liberals, on the other hand, are trying to prove an oft-repeated saying originally coined by President Abraham Lincoln: "You can't fool all of the people all of the time." Mr McGuinty has claimed for two years that our tax reductions only help the rich, which is absolutely untrue. He has ranted and raged against any tax cuts. "The Tories are hurting Ontario," he says. "How dare they give people their own money back?" Yet yesterday, on TVO, I saw Mr McGuinty say out loud quite clearly, when he was asked what he would do with taxes if he were Premier, "Oh, you can't raise taxes."

Don't miss this, because this ranks as the biggest flip-flop, the biggest ruse by the Liberals in many years in Ontario. This is the beginning of the most overt subterfuge since "We're going to get rid of the GST." This starts the most cynical ploy since "We're going to stop free trade." This starts the myth the Liberals intend to campaign on during the next election, just as their federal colleagues did before the 1992 federal election: "We care the most. We'll never cut health care or education funding." Then they cut health care and education funding by \$2.4 billion a year to Ontario alone.

Mr McGuinty portrays himself as a caring socialist to some audiences: "The tax cut is bad. How terrible. What rascals the Tories are." That's one face. To others, he's a born-again Tory: "The tax cut was the right thing to do. If elected, I'll maintain it. You can't increase taxes." That's his other face.

Dalton can fool some of the people all of the time, for instance his own caucus, but he can't fool all of the people even some of the time. So far we've seen a man of two minds, with two faces. We're beginning to wonder if Dalton McGuinty doesn't have a twin brother.

Ironically, Dalton was recently quoted as saying he's going to unmask Premier Harris. If there's anything that's been unmasked in recent days it's the oft-repeated myth that if you're Conservative, somehow you don't care about people. The second part of that myth is that only the Liberals care about people. I have to ask a question: Is that

why the Liberals have cut funding for health care and education by \$2.4 billion a year to Ontario? Is that why the 101 Liberal MPs from Ontario have never made a peep, never said a public word about those cuts? In fact, when was the last time anyone heard from the 101 MPs in Ontario?

Mr Baird: The 101 Dalmatians.

Mr Young: The 101 Dalmatians are in hiding because they've been told, "Toe the line or you're out." Just ask John Nunziata, the only Liberal who kept his word on the GST.

In fact, the Prime Minister of Canada is so paranoid about dissent that he declared the issue of lack of compensation to hepatitis C victims a matter of confidence: no free choice, no vote of conscience, but where's the compassion? If recent backtracking on the issue is any sign, and I think it is, there's no confidence in Mr Chrétien. Actually, it has been quite comical in recent days watching certain writers fall over themselves explaining how a provincial Conservative or a federal Reformer could support extending financial support to victims of hepatitis C beyond what the sanctimonious Liberals in Ottawa did. How they torture the truth to explain how the misunderstood Liberals were tricked into limiting aid by the mean provinces. Well, no one's buying it. The issue is actually much simpler: Premier Harris did the right thing. Our government is doing the right thing for those victims, just as we did the right thing in increasing spending on health care every year since we became the government, despite the \$2.4-billion cut from the federal Liberals, the 101 Dalmatians.

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How were we able to do those things? How could we afford to increase health care spending and offer additional aid to hepatitis C victims? Because we found the savings first. Now there's an idea. Just like the responsible families and competitive businesses in Ontario, they understand how difficult and how necessary that is.

Premier Harris, Minister Eves and our caucus made tough decisions in 1995, 1996 and 1997. We agreed to allow restructuring of hospitals, after getting expert advice. We agreed to reduce the number of school boards to save \$150 million a year on administration. We reduced fraud in welfare and asked those receiving benefits to take training themselves or to give something back in service to their communities. In other words, we agreed to be fiscally responsible. It was not easy. It was not fun. It was not enjoyable. But it was the right thing to do then, and Ontarians are beginning to receive the benefits now.

Mr Eves has chosen not to balance the budget early in our term but to stay with his plan and reinvest in the priorities of the people of Ontario: health care, education and safe streets, long-term investments that will work for Ontarians because the people who are promising them are people who keep their promises. Even people who disagree with our government have said again and again, "Well, you said you were going to do that." It's so true. Now, as we reinvest in Ontario, we have the credibility to bring our commitments to fruition. We have the track

record to prove that we mean what we say, and because we did what we said we would, we have the money to pay for these priorities. We're returning Ontario to being one of the best-managed jurisdictions in the world, the best place to live, to work and to raise a family.

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): I'd like to thank the member for Halton Centre (a) for the very enjoyable speech and (b) for sharing his time with me, and thank my colleagues for agreeing to that. I appreciate that. I figured after hearing me on the MAI you may not have wanted to hear me again today.

I wanted to talk about some of the output that is going to come to Huron county as a result of the budget. As a result of our implementing the tax cuts, most of us know how many dollars are going to be reinvested in our communities as a result of people having dollars to spend as opposed to the government having those dollars. In Huron county, the projected income tax cuts, when they're fully implemented, will support our community by putting \$16 million back annually into the economy. That's a very important number for Huron county, and I think it's important for us to know.

When I thought about speaking tonight, I wanted to talk about health care, as the member for London Centre did. I think we've heard that we all see the health care issue very differently. In my community what has happened is that the reinvestments in our community far outweigh the dollars that have been taken out of the hospitals; they've been put back into services like long-term care, community services, things that people need and use within my community.

What has happened in my community is that I had five small hospitals, and those five small hospitals have just recently agreed to come together with a common administration. They've agreed to work together and look at where services need to be delivered to the people of Huron. What that will mean first off is that we will have \$13 million that will move from administration in the eight hospitals of Huron-Perth to quality patient care. That's a very important issue. In a very small budget for hospitals, \$13 million will go a long way to providing services for the people of the community.

The second thing that has happened in my community is that we have seen some substantial reinvestments that have made health care a better quality of care. In rural Ontario over the last 10 to 15 years, it has been very difficult to get doctors for emergency service both at night and on the weekends. We mustn't forget that it was this government that decided that \$70 dollars per hour should be reinvested into the community for the weekends and evenings to ensure that we had doctors in emergency rooms. That reinvestment in my community of Huron county has been substantial. It has totalled \$1.8 million over the last two years. That's a big dollar value that ensures that the quality of care is there for the people of my community.

Some of the other things that are very important that we've seen with health care in the reinvestments — and as my colleague from Halton Centre said, you have to find

the savings first to be able to reinvest them. What we have also seen in our community is that the government has really focused on ambulance service, defibrillators, services that get the person from home to the hospital.

In the past, because it's an agricultural community, we've had some terrible farm accidents and we've needed to move these people quickly to the hospitals. We have improved our ability to get people to the hospitals quickly. We have improved our ability, once they're in the ambulance, to save lives. We've put approximately \$200,000 into ambulances, defibrillators, some programs that make the people in the ambulance have a better quality of education too, so that also helps to improve the quality of care we receive in Huron county.

We have put \$51,000 into cardiovascular disease prevention programs, which I think is important to do, for us all to understand that we have to lead healthy lives to have healthy hearts. We also have put dollars into immunization. In Huron county we've received \$220,000 for hepatitis B immunizations. We've received measles and pneumococcal immunizations, all of that totalling another \$200,000. So public health has been another area where this government has decided to take money and reinvest it, because that leads to preventive maintenance, if you will, of the people of Huron county, and that's important.

We also have a midwifery program in Huron county; it's been working out of one of the hospitals and working quite well. With that program, although the dollars have not been substantial, the quality of service has certainly increased. I think we're getting a better quality of service as a result of that program, another thing that I think is improving our health care in the county.

We also have adult day care programs, homemaking and professional services. Another \$200,000 was invested into that, and that also is important for seniors who live alone or need extra care, who deal with Alzheimer's, people who have parents or spouses who need time to do other things so they have a life also. We have reinvested to make sure that their lives have some free time.

We looked at dollars to decide where our hospital services should go in the future, our district health council report. One of the things that I think is important is Healthy Babies, Healthy Children. In our community, where we have a lot of isolation, it's important for us to make sure that those children have an opportunity to be looked in on, especially if they're high-risk. That program has started with this government and more dollars have been put into it. I believe that if we deal with young families very early on or before the children are born, we have a better chance of making sure these children have a healthy existence.

We also put money into mental health services, which is important, because we haven't had very many mental health services in Huron county. I look forward to being able to ensure that we get better case management for our people, have better crisis intervention, have community outreach for the elderly, family development and consumer-survivor programs. All those things are very important.

What I'm really trying to stress here is that we had about \$2 million taken out of our hospital health care budget in Huron county, but we've had reinvestments as administrative dollars have gone to patient care, reinvestments in long-term care, about \$8 million, \$9 million. From our standpoint, our county has really seen the benefit of taking a hard line, looking to see where dollars should be invested.

The member from London suggested that this was all party politics and that somehow the Conservative members were getting all the advantages of this. We know that what has happened is that the restructuring commission has come into a number of areas and in a non-partisan way has said: "What does this community need? How can we better service the people of the community?" — decisions I don't believe were based on politics. I believe these decisions were based on great health care, and I'm proud to be a part of this government.

2120

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I wish to say to the member for Huron that while I don't agree with everything she said, it was rather interesting nevertheless.

The member for Halton Centre reminds me of what Stephen Harper, who he would probably find to be rather significant, had to say about Parliament. This would certainly relate to this Parliament. At the time, he called MPs "regional sales reps," and described the parliamentary system as "excessively partisan, to the point of crippling Parliament's legislative agenda." I think that best describes the speech not by the member for Huron but by the member for Halton Centre, whose speech represented as much of a misrepresentation of the facts as I have seen in some period of time. Obviously, the member for Halton Centre has banned all the books for this year that he can in his riding, and now he has to turn to some other issues which are of some significance perhaps to this House.

I think what he misunderstands, deliberately or otherwise, is that when you initiate a substantial income tax cut when you are running a significant deficit, you have two things happen. One is that you have to make more substantial cuts or deeper cuts in essential services which governments provide than you would otherwise have to do. The second is that you have to borrow money to make up for that deficit. In other words, you increase the debt of the province. If you were to have been patient to implement your tax cuts after you had balanced the budget, you would find that it had more of an impact.

As I said to the member this morning, she should be sending a congratulatory letter of appreciation to Bill Clinton for the booming economy in the US, where they're buying our products from Ontario.

Mr Wildman: I listened with interest to the two presentations by the member for Halton Centre and the member for Huron. They had one thing in common: You could have put at the end a little tag saying, "These have been paid political announcements." Other than that, they were actually quite different.

The member for Huron went through a litany of expenditures — some cuts, but mainly expenditures — that she believes have benefited particularly health care in her constituency. It was sort of like a long list one might see perhaps in an election pamphlet.

The speech from the member for Halton Centre was of a different sort. It was putting forward the government's view, but there was far less concern for services to constituents than in the member for Huron's speech. Rather, it was more involved with arguing that those who have done well in life, those who have made a good deal of profit or have made a lot of money, shouldn't "have their money confiscated by government." I think that's the term he used. He also indicated that those at the bottom, who I would think all of us, of whatever political party, would believe are vulnerable and should receive assistance, somehow are living off everyone else. The speech lacked compassion and concern. It was a sort of selfish type of speech, which I found rather disappointing.

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): When we're debating the budget, the members across the way always want to talk about the pessimistic point of view. There's no optimism whatsoever when they speak of what's happening in the economy in Ontario. I just want them to realize, and to talk a little bit in the short time I have, about the very positive things that are happening in the Niagara region.

The St Catharines Standard printed a number of success stories on April 27, 1998. There are actually three or four sections of various success stories. They did a fantastic job of telling people in the Niagara region what's happening in the Niagara region. They talk about —

Mr Bill Grimmer (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): The other side, Tom: the Niagara Credit Union.

Mr Froese: Yes, they talk about the Niagara Credit Union, where I was formerly employed for 24 years, and how successful they have been. They talk about the tourism attractions. They talk about manufacturing and industry. They talk about the grape and wine industry and how successful that's been.

Much of it has been since 1995, when we took office. As a matter of fact, the St Catharines Standard editorial last week said: "The Ontario Tories took a big step this week towards vindicating themselves on their ambitious targets when Finance Minister Eves showed us a 1998 budget which has to be seen as almost universally good news for taxpayers."

I don't really have time to go into all of it, but the people in St Catharines, the people in Niagara region, know what success is happening. We don't have to go to the States. We don't necessarily have to support the Buffalo Sabres —

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. The Chair recognizes the member for Essex South.

Mr Crozier: I think the taxpayers of Ontario see a certain hypocrisy in government: You have two levels of

government that overspend. One level then tries to reduce its expenditures, and of course the next level of government says: "You can't do that to us. You can't take that money away from us. You're not treating us fairly." Then when that level of government downloads on to the municipalities, the municipalities say, "You can't do this to us," and the government says: "I'm sorry. The devil made us do it."

I don't even mind on occasion reading from the Common Sense Revolution, the sixth edition. The special introduction on the sixth printing says, "We would take into account any changes in the economic environment." It seems to me they're admitting, "We can handle it." They go on to say, "Now that the Martin federal budget has been delivered, with its significant reductions in federal transfers" — not necessarily to health, not necessarily to social services, not necessarily to education or housing — "here is the envelope." I think this government has used the word "envelope" frequently. "You spend it how you know best." It seems to me Mike Harris is saying, "We can handle it."

Then the whining starts. Once they've said to the people of Ontario, "We can handle it," then they start to whine.

So what are they going to do in addition to this whining? They're now going to make health care spending dependent upon gambling. That's criminal in itself. I don't care whether gambling is legal or not; to make health care spending in this province dependent upon gambling is criminal, and I don't think it should be that way.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Halton Centre has two minutes to respond.

Mr Young: I thank my colleagues for their comments.

I would like to ask the member for St Catharines to reflect a little bit on what he said. He talked about partisanship, so I'd like to ask the member for St Catharines how many times he's voted with our government in three years. I'd like to ask the member for St Catharines how many times he voted against his own party in the last three years, or any other. I'd like to ask the member for St Catharines to please be very careful before you fall off your high horse.

The member for Algoma talks about compassion. The NDP think they have a corner on compassion. By July, 640,000 low-income people, the highest in the history of Ontario, will pay no taxes at all in Ontario. Others with low incomes will have an over 40% tax cut. Some 400 new drugs will be on the formulary for people in need, and 345,000 families will have a new breadwinner in their family. We will have the highest amount in history spent on health care. So I say to the self-righteous members of the Liberal Party and the NDP, please get off your high horse. That is compassion.

The Acting Speaker: It being past 9:30, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 o'clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2131.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Second Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
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Deuxième session, 36^e législature

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Mardi 12 mai 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 12 May 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 12 mai 1998

*The House met at 1331.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ROAD SAFETY

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): Today I will be introducing a bill entitled An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to improve Safety at Highway Intersections by providing for the installation and use of Red Light Cameras. This bill allows municipalities to install red light cameras at intersections and to collect fines from convictions of red light runners. Furthermore, it directs municipalities to use the funds collected for the purpose of maintaining the red light cameras and improving traffic safety.

The Minister of Transportation says he is increasing the fine to \$210 as his way of stopping the growing epidemic of red light runners. What the minister failed to tell us is, who is going to be there to issue the ticket? Who is going to catch the driver running through the red light? For instance, in Toronto alone there are 1,800 intersections. Who is going to catch the runners?

Red light camera technology, as provided for in my bill, has been proven to save lives and cut down on accidents. In Australia there was a 35% decrease in collisions. In New York City and San Francisco, red light violations fell by 30%.

Increasing fines, as the Minister of Transportation says he will do, is only a small part of the solution. What he has to do is use proven technology. It's time to put safety first and to act on this crucial public safety issue. Listen to the police chiefs and the mayors and the people of this province who want to have some action on red light running, and the over 80% of motorists who support red light cameras. It's time for the minister to protect public safety.

EVENTS IN KAPUSKASING

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): The place to be this weekend is in my riding of Cochrane North, and in particular Kapuskasing, where there are two special events taking place.

The first is the second annual Festival de Théâtre Communautaire Franco-ontarien. This event will bring over 130 actors from across Ontario to Kapuskasing.

Community theatre has always played an important role in the preservation of Franco-Ontarian culture in communities throughout Ontario. The stage will be alive in Kapuskasing largely as the result of the hard work and dedication of many volunteers. In particular, Francine Garon deserves special recognition for her contribution. For all those listening out there, the number to call is le Centre de Loisirs in Kapuskasing, 705-335-8461.

The second special event is the fifth Jeux franco-ontariens, which will be taking place this weekend at the école secondaire Cité des Jeunes in Kapuskasing. Young Franco-Ontarians from throughout Ontario will be converging on Kapuskasing to participate in sporting events and games.

Join us in celebrating the vitality and richness of our Franco-Ontarian heritage this weekend. Come to Cochrane North. Hear all about the two Franco-Ontarian events taking place. I'm sure everybody is going to look forward to the beautiful weather we have up in northern Ontario at this time of year.

NURSING WEEK

Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York): It gives me great pleasure to recognize this week as Nursing Week in Ontario. Today, May 12, is observed internationally as International Nursing Day and coincides with the birthday of Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing.

During this week, Ontario's 110,000 registered nurses and 30,000 registered practical nurses will be engaged in numerous activities designed to raise the level of awareness among Ontario's citizens of the role of the nursing profession in assisting people to attain and maintain health.

As Paula Jordain, president of specialty care at Cedarvale Lodge in my riding of Durham-York stated:

"With the move to community services, it is not only important to recognize the role nurses play in the community but to let them know how much we admire and respect their ability to adapt to the dramatic changes taking place in health services, always putting the patient first and foremost."

Nurses provide services to people in public health units, in nursing homes, long-term-care and chronic care agencies, in hospitals and in their own homes. This year, for the first time, nurse practitioners will be registering with the College of Nurses under the Expanded Nursing Services for Patients Act that was proclaimed in February of this year.

I hope that all members of this House will take the time not only this week but throughout the year to recognize that nursing is key to quality health care and that nurses are a valuable resource to the people of Ontario.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): My statement is for the Minister of Education. Parents in Ottawa-Carleton are discovering just how flawed your education funding formula is and how it is going to close their neighbourhood schools. You know that in Ottawa-Carleton we have tremendous needs for new schools in the suburban growth areas such as Stittsville and Kanata. You know all about Holy Trinity Catholic high school in Kanata, with 30 of its 70 classrooms as portables. Yet your funding formula will force the Ottawa-Carleton Catholic school board to close up to 10 of its schools in order to access the accommodation dollars your funding formula promises. Yet these are not small schools we're talking about. They are viable schools that form the heart of their community.

Why should communities with JK-to-grade-6 schools with over 250 students each be sacrificed to meet the needs of the growing communities in the suburbs? We're talking about schools such as St Anthony's in Ottawa's Centretown, Dr F.J. McDonald in Britannia, and even in Nepean's Crystal Beach area, St Thomas separate elementary school.

Similarly, the Ottawa-Carlton District School Board is faced with closing up to 20 schools, both in the downtown core and in the older suburbs, to access your formula's accommodation dollars.

Minister, why are you trying to close viable neighbourhood schools? Why are you pitting one community against another? Why are you tossing out child care programs in these schools, English-as-a-second-language programs in these schools? They serve the community. They're viable. Why do you want to close them?

CRIME STOPPERS

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): Mr Speaker, you would know that this last weekend in Timmins, probably as in many other communities, Crime Stoppers had their Jailathon, a good opportunity for the people of the community to give money to the Crime Stoppers organization to help with making our communities safe.

As were many other members of the Assembly, I was asked to appear before the good judge on Saturday morning, at which point I was charged with excessive electioneering. They set the bail at \$900, a fantastic amount in a community like mine, but with the good wishes and the hard work of the people who were walking through Timmins Square that day, they made bail — all but \$20 worth. I had to come up with one other name. I thought, who else but Mike Harris, the Premier of the province of Ontario, to put up the extra \$20 that is necessary for me to spring bail so that I can get back and represent the people of Cochrane South?

Here in the assembly today, I ask the Premier: Will he do the right thing and make sure that the \$20 I put them down for on the form will go back to the Crime Stoppers in the community of Timmins? My question to the Premier is: Will you come up with the \$20?

1340

TOURISM IN NORTHUMBERLAND

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): Last Tuesday, members of this House listened as the Minister of Finance brought down the 1998 Ontario Budget. The Minister of Finance talked about the renewal of Ontario's economy: Job growth is soaring, investment is increasing, consumer confidence is on the rise and the deficit is falling.

In my riding of Northumberland, we are seeing evidence of this economic recovery, especially in the tourism industry. For example:

The Big Apple in Colborne, one of the premier tourist attractions in Northumberland, is expanding its seating capacity, bakery and restaurant facilities to accommodate the increased tourist flow.

The Golden Beach Resort, the largest resort on Rice Lake, is adding 265 units, which will be geared to retirees.

Ste Anne's Country Inn and Spa, located near Grafton, has seen a sharp increase in the number of people staying at the inn. So has the Cobourg Motor Inn and Convention Centre, which is presently expanding facilities to accommodate extra business.

These are just a few examples of businesses in my riding that are benefiting from a vibrant economy. Like other sectors, the tourism industry appreciates what our economic policies have done to increase consumer spending. Consumers have more money in their pockets thanks to our tax cuts. Most importantly, these companies are creating lasting full-time jobs.

I encourage all members to visit Northumberland and tour the many cultural and historical attractions you'll find there.

NURSING WEEK

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Today, as part of Nursing Week, the people across Ontario celebrate the birthday and many accomplishments of Florence Nightingale, who set the benchmark for all nurses to follow. Our nurses in Ontario have mirrored the example of Florence Nightingale well and have proven, through their dedication and love, the care and concern they have for the people they serve.

The nurses of Ontario deserve to have a nurses' bill of rights implemented by the Harris government immediately. This bill of rights should enshrine that nurses have the right to provide high quality care, that they have the right to be heard and consulted on health care issues, and that they have the right to be recognized and treated as equals in the health care system.

Our nurses deserve the right to work in settings that are free from harassment and discrimination and that nurture

learning, diversity, personal growth, job satisfaction and mutual respect, all in working conditions that promote and foster professionalism and teamwork.

Nurses should have the right to be advocates for their communities and the people they care for without fear of reprisal.

Above all, nurses want the right to deliver care in an integrated, publicly funded, not-for-profit health care system that is grounded in the principles of the Canada Health Act.

I urge the government to pass this nurses' bill of rights today, this week, to show nurses that they truly care about them.

COMPENSATION FOR HEPATITIS C PATIENTS

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I rise today to again ask the provincial and federal governments to stop playing politics with the hepatitis C issue. Last week I read part of a letter from my constituent Charles Duguay. Today I add my name to another victim, Teresa Caughill, from Sault Ste Marie. She says: "Please consider the thousands of people across this province and the entire country who are praying for our governments to do the right thing and make a start at correcting a horrible injustice. We did not ask for this but a little compassion goes a long way."

I also add my voice to a petition that I will be presenting in the House later today, from members of my community, on the same issue. The end of that petition goes like this: "The financial and emotional burden placed on these Canadians is unthinkable. The stigma which is associated with this disease still plagues thousands across this country. Without compensation, Canadians will continue to suffer and die through no fault of their own. This tragedy must stop!"

Today I ask Mike Harris and Minister Rock and anybody else involved with this issue to please get on with it and resolve it, and to take into consideration and invite to the table those who are directly affected, so that at the end of the day you will come up with a package that answers the need of all of those folks who have unfortunately been exposed to this very difficult circumstance so they can get on with their lives.

NIAGARA FALLS CANUCKS

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I'm proud to stand in the House today and inform colleagues of the success of the Niagara Falls Canucks junior B hockey club. Last week, the Niagara Falls Canucks, in a thrilling third-period comeback, defeated the Elmira Sugar Kings 5-4 to win the Sutherland Cup junior B Ontario championship.

Under the leadership of head coach Terry Masterson, whose father founded the team in 1972, and assistant coaches Duane Smith and Doug Chipman, the Sutherland Cup victory topped off a fantastic season for the Canucks. The Canucks breezed through earlier playoff rounds un-

defeated and then with great tenacity tangled with Chatham and Elmira to win the cup.

While the victory took a total team effort, great leadership was provided by veterans in their final year: captain and defenceman Jason Lynch, goalie Domenic Di Giorgio, centre Matt Masterson, and defenceman Jeff Bruno.

This victory continues in the great tradition of Niagara Falls junior hockey. We look forward to future successes led by returning Canucks Kevin Dallmand, Garrett Dionne and John MacLean.

Way to go, Canucks. Niagara Falls is proud of your championship victory.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN INVOLVED IN PROSTITUTION ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LA PROTECTION DES ENFANTS QUI SE LIVRENT À LA PROSTITUTION

Mr Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 18, An Act to protect Children involved in Prostitution / Projet de loi 18, Loi visant à protéger les enfants qui se livrent à la prostitution.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): The purpose of this bill is to protect children under 18 who are involved in prostitution. The bill gives police officers the power, with a warrant, to apprehend a child involved in prostitution and return the child to his or her family or to place the child in a protective, safe house. The police officer may also apprehend a child without a warrant where the child's life or safety is seriously and imminently in danger.

The bill would allow a child, his or her parents, or a child protection worker to apply to the court for a restraining order against a person who has abused the child or who has encouraged the child or is likely to encourage the child to engage in prostitution.

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ PARENTALE

Mr McLean moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 19, An Act to make Parents Responsible for the Wrongful Acts of their Children / Projet de loi 19, Loi visant à rendre les parents responsables des actes illégitimes de leurs enfants.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

A short comment?

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): This bill allows a person to bring civil action against the parents of a child who deliberately took, damaged or destroyed the person's

property. A parent may be held liable for up to \$6,000 in damages in an action under the proposed act.

RED LIGHT CAMERA ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LES DISPOSITIFS PHOTOGRAPHIQUES DE FEU ROUGE

Mr Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 20, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to improve Safety at Highway Intersections by providing for the installation and use of Red Light Cameras / Projet de loi 20, Loi modifiant le Code de la route afin d'améliorer la sécurité aux intersections de voies publiques en prévoyant l'installation et l'utilisation de dispositifs photographiques de feu rouge.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): This bill would allow municipalities to install red light cameras at traffic lights and highway intersections in a municipality in order to determine whether motorists are obeying traffic light signals. The bill would allow a municipality that installs cameras to collect the fines from convictions obtained based on photographic evidence from those cameras. The fines must be used by the municipality for the purpose of installing, operating or maintaining red light cameras or for other purposes related to traffic safety.

1350

ORAL QUESTIONS

TUITION FEES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My first question today is for the Minister of Education. I want to go back to some of the documentation you put out at the time of the last election, specifically with respect to your commitment to post-secondary education and funding and the student debt load.

In your document called *New Directions, Volume Two: A Blueprint for Learning in Ontario*, you said the following, "Tuition fees should be allowed to rise over a four-year period to 25% of the operating costs." Prior to your deregulation of fees announced earlier this week and prior to your 60% increase, tuition fees were somewhere around the 23% mark. Today in Ontario the average is 35% of operating costs. At some universities they're actually at the 50% mark of operating costs.

What I want to know is, what happened between the time you wrote this document and today? Why did you fail to meet your responsibilities to Ontario students?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): I'm glad that the Leader of the Opposition raised that issue, because the document that is relevant, the *Common Sense Revolution*, made a statement with regard to university tuitions. I'll quote exactly from the *Common Sense Revolution*. This is the document where

we made a number of promises to the people of Ontario, promises with regard to tax cuts, promises with regard to the deficit, promises with regard to the running of the province, each and every one of them which we have pursued and executed.

The promise is, "We propose to partially deregulate tuition over a two-year period, enabling schools to charge appropriately for their services." That's exactly what we've done. The reason we've done that is to improve the opportunity for our young people and the quality in our post-secondary institutions.

Mr McGuinity: Not only did you say that tuition fees shouldn't be increased beyond the 25% portion of operating costs, but let's look at what the *Common Sense Revolution* said. In order to facilitate that increase in fees, you said the following, "We will implement a new income-contingent loan program similar to others being introduced around the world."

Are you going to stand up now and tell me that you've kept this promise? You said you'd increase it to 25% — it's at 35% and in some cases at 50% — and you said you would minimize the impact by introducing an income-contingent loan repayment scheme. What I want to ask you now is, where is your income-contingent loan repayment scheme that is designed to help students?

Hon David Johnson: If it says we're going to do it in the *Common Sense Revolution*, we will do it.

I might add that we have been attempting to work with the federal government, which is a Liberal federal government —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister.

Hon David Johnson: — we haven't had much cooperation from the federal government in this matter.

In addition, we have put out an RFP to the banking institution, and we have yet to receive any cooperation from the bank. Notwithstanding the lack of cooperation from the federal government and notwithstanding the lack of cooperation from the banking institution, it says in the *Common Sense Revolution* that we're going to implement an income-contingent loan repayment program and we will do it.

Mr McGuinity: It's interesting when we go back to some of the words used by this party before they became the government, and I think it's important to consider these. They were talking about the OSAP program of the day and they said it doesn't even come close to meeting the goal of helping every needy student. I want to quote the following, because I think it's important. This is what this party said:

"The result is a tragic loss of opportunity for young Ontarians, particularly those from lower-income families. As they lose their chance for higher education, they lose many of their choices for career, lifestyle and personal goals. Ultimately, society also loses as young people fall short of their potential and their dreams."

Fine words uttered in those days. What have you done since then? You have increased tuition fees by a minimum of 60%; in some cases they're going up to 100%, in cases

of deregulation. You have not provided any new student assistance. What happened? Normally people are converted on the road to Damascus; you lost your soul on the road to Damascus. What happened to your interest in students?

Hon David Johnson: The member opposite knows full well we have not increased tuition fees. Tuition fees went up when the Liberals were in power. They went up by 35%, and what did we get for the 35% increase in tuition fees?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Look, we're going to wait it out, because I can't hear the minister in his response.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon David Johnson: What did we get for the 35% increase when the Liberals were in power? Nothing. What do we get in terms of the degree today that tuition goes up? For the first time, we have required that our institutions prepare a quality program to show that the quality of the program will increase.

When the Liberals were in the power, the maximum grant, direct assistance to students, was just barely over \$200 million. Today it's in excess of that by over \$300 million. We have more than doubled the direct assistance to students — over \$530 million. On top of that, the participation rate in our universities and colleges is higher today than it was during the term of the NDP or during the term of the Liberals.

The Speaker: New question, leader of the official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: My question is for the Minister of the Environment, but I can say in passing to the Minister of Education that those words are cold comfort to the students and parents who are going to lose their dream as a result of your chucking them out of university.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Let me be clear to the members on the government side. I don't tell you how to answer the questions. I'm not going to tell them how to ask them.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): He was making a statement.

The Speaker: Member for Dufferin-Peel, I don't want to hear from you any more.

1400

VEHICLE EMISSION TESTING

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): To the Minister of the Environment: Today a very important report was released by the Ontario Medical Association. I'm sure you're familiar with the contents of that report. In essence, Ontario's doctors are telling us that our air in this province is making us sick. They're telling us that our air is even killing us: 1,800 people in this province are dying each year from polluted air, and even more are filling our hospitals and emergency rooms with heart problems and respiratory problems. In the words of Dr

John Gray, president of the OMA, "Air pollution is a public health crisis."

Now, you and I both know that summer is coming and air quality is at its worst during the summer, and we both know that there is a means by which we can clean up the air, at least to some extent; it's efficient, it's effective and it doesn't cost too much. It's automobile emissions testing. Will you now assure us that your program will be up and running for this summer?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I want to assure all members of the Legislature that this government is committed to protecting our air quality in this province. Last year we announced that we were going to implement a vehicle emissions testing program. We did this, after previous governments rejected the idea as being too much of an intrusion into people's lives. This government has taken a very courageous stand with regard to bringing forward perhaps the most comprehensive vehicle emissions program in all of North America. We intend to implement that in a reasonable, competent fashion, and we will do so as soon as it's practicable to do so.

Mr McGuinty: Let me tell you about the courage of this minister when it comes to the protection of our environment. He cut his budget in half. He let go one third of his staff. That's the kind of courage displayed by this minister in the face of environmental difficulties.

Ontario's doctors are telling us that our air is making our people sick. You have the responsibility, and nobody else more so than you over there, to address that issue. You can. Get that vehicle emissions testing program up and running in time for this summer. You haven't listened to the environmentalists. You haven't listened to the people on this side of the House. I want to know if you're going to Ontario's doctors. Will you get your program up and running for this summer?

Hon Mr Sterling: This ministry has done more to deal with air quality in this province than has been done in the last 10 years. We have lowered the gasoline volatility regulation 271, which requires gasoline refiners and blenders to reduce the smog-causing fumes from summer-grade gasoline. This will eliminate 18,000 tonnes of gasoline emissions. Previous governments neglected to do this. We have an aggressive plan for environmental standards focusing on air. This is the first time in more than 20 years that these 70 standards will be dealt with and updated. We have introduced a new interim air quality standard for particulates, the first time a particulates standard has been introduced in this province ever. We have upgraded the provincial air quality monitoring network, making it among the most modern and best-equipped in North America. We are committed to improving the quality of air in the province and we are doing it.

Mr McGuinty: We shouldn't lose sight of the important facts in this, Minister. Number one, you cut half your budget and you laid off one third of your staff; they're the people who inspect, monitor and prosecute our air polluters. The second important fact is that air quality in

Ontario is getting worse on your watch. There is no doubt about that.

I want to come back to a very, very simple question: the vehicle emissions testing program. Our air quality is going to get dramatically worse during the summer days. Will we have your vehicle emissions testing program up and running before the summer begins?

Hon Mr Sterling: When I announced the vehicle emissions testing program last August I did indicate that there would be some voluntary testing this summer. I indicated that the program would be in place hopefully in the late part of the fall. I'm still living to those deadlines.

POLICE PURSUITS

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): My question is to the Solicitor General. Yesterday morning another innocent person lost his life during a police chase on a residential street here in Toronto. This gentleman was 73 years old. He was riding his bicycle on the sidewalk because he was afraid of the traffic. He was taking his daily ride to the park to walk his dogs.

Anyone who heard the story has to wonder what was so important that the police would carry out a chase like this in a residential area. We know the policy is that if an officer is in pursuit, it's supposed to be closely monitored by a road sergeant, so I think it's fair to wonder why the police wouldn't have called off the pursuit when it was clearly a residential area and therefore when lives would be in danger. The answer we get is that police were chasing four teenagers, 14- and 15-year-olds who were suspected of shoplifting.

Minister, our concern is the link between this activity and the attitude and tone that your government has set in this area. I want to ask you, is it your policy to support and encourage this kind of over-the-top action in order to catch four teenage shoplifters?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Labour, Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): It would be inappropriate to comment on any specific case, because this matter, as you know, is being investigated by the SIU. I can say that generally speaking there is a police pursuit directive issued by the Ministry of the Solicitor General that is available to the police services in Ontario. It lists various criteria that the police services are to consider and police officers are to consider when engaged in pursuit.

We acknowledge that this is a difficult balance that police officers are faced with in emergency situations, the balance between public safety and their obligation to apprehend persons who are fleeing after committing, or possibly committing, a criminal offence. This is a difficult subject that our police officers face, acknowledging that this is Police Week and acknowledging the challenges our police officers face on the streets of Ontario.

Mr Silipo: We understand that the SIU is investigating this particular instance and we will leave the investigation to deal with that. What I want to raise with you again, Minister, and I ask you to focus your comments on this, if

you would, is the broader issue. That has to do with the attitude and the policies that your government is setting, which we believe are shifting that balance.

What you're doing through your so-called crime control commissioners, for example, is you're cracking down on things like shoplifting, squeegee kids, panhandling because you believe that's what is going to lead to serious crimes. What you're doing with your policies and with your directives and with your actions is that you're pushing our police officers to go after, as happened yesterday, kids who are getting away from a potential shoplifting situation in a van and putting in danger, as happened in this case, the lives of innocent people. At the end of the day these are relatively minor crimes. We are all in favour of doing what has to be done to deal with crime, but don't you believe that your actions are shifting the balance completely inappropriately and forcing our police officers to take these —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. Minister.

Hon Mr Flaherty: The directive to which I refer was created by the Ministry of the Solicitor General in 1989. It's been with us for some years and deals with factors which police officers need to take into consideration during police chases. We support the policing community in this province. In the budget, the Minister of Finance announced funding for an additional 1,000 uniformed front-line police officers in Ontario. We are funding the anti-biker gang squad, which I announced yesterday in London, and 115 cadets so that we can get more Ontario Provincial Police officers, uniformed officers, on the front line in Ontario. All this is for the security of our communities, the security of our families in Ontario.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

1410

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Minister, I hope you didn't do that on purpose. I hope you didn't purposely miss the point here.

There's a 73-year-old man from my community who is dead. He was a grandfather, he was a father, he was a husband, he was a neighbour. Your crime control commission talks about your get-tough-on-kids policy of broken windows, like it's all about broken windows, but don't talk to his family and friends about broken windows today. It's the balance, it's the tone, it's the way in which you're pushing police to go after kids in relatively non-serious situations that could lead to what happened yesterday. There's a very timely column in the Toronto Star today written by Jim Coyle. It's incredible, actually. He says:

"But sadly, if crime has been exaggerated, so too has the commission. The crime control commission is just three obscure Conservative backbenchers, whose perverse task it is not to control crime but to incite fear of it.

"For this is a government fuelled by fear and loathing."

Minister, maybe it's time for you to rethink that balance. Maybe it's time for you to think about the consequences of your government's inflammatory rhetoric. Will you do that?

Hon Mr Flaherty: I appreciate the tragedy that occurred yesterday in Toronto. It's always a concern when persons lose their lives or are seriously injured in the course of what was apparently a police pursuit. I understand the honourable member's concern.

The guidelines are there. Public safety is the paramount consideration. The criteria to be taken into account in a very difficult situation by police officers are listed in the policy directive. The Toronto police service also has its own directive to its officers.

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I have a question to the Attorney General. It has been 16 months now since all members in this Legislature unanimously passed Bill 82, the Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Act, and it's been a whole year since you proclaimed this bill. Since then, you have failed to do anything about half of the new enforcement tools that you promised to implement to crack down on defaulting parents. Can you explain to women and children right across this province why you failed to keep your promise?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): As you're aware, we have brought in tools to deal with collections within family support that have never existed and that were in fact opposed by the previous government.

We have now reported 73,000 defaulting payors to credit bureaus. There have been 1,500 notices regarding driver's licence suspensions and 350 licences have been suspended. We are doing a number of things by way of court actions to enforce orders to pay. We have other issues that will be proclaimed shortly dealing with joint bank accounts and partnership accounts which will again provide much greater access to forcing people who are self-employed to pay.

We are implementing each and every one of those items and we're collecting more money than the previous government was ever able to collect.

Ms Martel: It's been 16 months since everyone in this room agreed to pass this bill, and you have failed to implement half of the measures you promised to take.

Let me raise a case with you with respect to joint bank accounts. Let me tell you the story of Micheline Labelle, who is a recipient with two teenage children. The payor in this case owes arrears of \$5,122.66 because you have failed to take any action on payors who shelter income and assets with third parties. The Family Responsibility Office cannot garnish a joint bank account.

You promised to close this loophole 16 months ago and you have failed to take any action in this regard. Can you explain to Micheline and her children and thousands of other families like hers why you've done nothing in this regard?

Hon Mr Harnick: The issue the member refers to is an issue that should have been implemented five, six, seven or eight years ago. Quite frankly —

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Just 16 months would be fine.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Algoma, come to order, please.

Hon Mr Harnick: The measures that were set out in Bill 82 were measures that were rejected out of hand by the previous government. When we took over and recreated the Family Responsibility Office we had to deal with 90,000 backlogged items, which we have now dealt with. We're distributing more money today, and answering the phone calls that come in today, that was never able to be done in the past. We are methodically implementing all the items in Bill 82 that will permit us better enforcement tools. We will very shortly be dealing with those issues. I invite the member to provide me with the details so that we can take a look and see if we can help her constituent.

Ms Martel: Minister, you must be the only person in this place who believes that "very shortly" means 16 months. It's been 16 whole months since this Legislature passed a bill to give you the power to put into place the new enforcement tools, and in that 16 months you have only managed to implement half of the new enforcement tools that everyone in this place agreed with.

Let me give you another detail about the case of Micheline Labelle. Sixteen months ago you promised you would give the Ontario Lottery Corp the authority to deduct support arrears from payors winning \$1,000 or more in a lottery. You should know that in her case the payor has recently won several millions of dollars in a major lottery. Because you have failed to take any action on lottery winning, the Family Responsibility Office cannot get the \$5,000 in arrears that is owed to Micheline that the payor just won.

Minister, you've had 16 months to do something, to put these enforcement tools into effect. You haven't done so because you're incompetent. How do you justify your lack of action on these important measures?

Hon Mr Harnick: We have rebuilt the Family Responsibility Office so that in this past month we've collected \$41.8 million. This is a 33.5% increase from April 1995 when they were the government. We have been implementing the enforcement tools that never existed in the Family Responsibility Office before we passed Bill 82.

The previous government — the third party — laughed about these enforcement tools. They laughed about the idea of accessing lottery winnings. They laughed at licence suspensions.

Today we are collecting more money faster than has ever been collected before.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Shame on you. Get your act together.

The Speaker: Member for Riverdale, come to order, please.

POLICE PURSUITS

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): I have a question for the Solicitor General and I wish to return to the issue of high-speed police chases.

Clyde Barnaby was riding his bicycle on the sidewalk yesterday morning because, being a 73-year-old senior citizen, he was afraid to ride his bike on the street. He thought he would be safer on the sidewalk. But yesterday, as we all know, he was tragically killed as a direct result of a police high-speed chase.

Minister, I know you've only been on the job for a few weeks, and I'm sure you are upset about this, as I am, but this is not the first time a citizen in Ontario has lost his or her life due to a high-speed police chase. We know that police forces in other jurisdictions have developed the technology to provide the alternatives to high-speed police chases in residential neighbourhoods. Would you tell us today what the ministry has done for the last three years to prevent these tragedies from happening?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Labour, Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): There have been a number of steps taken by the ministry, particularly with respect to intensive training in all aspects of the provincial pursuit directive at the Ontario Police College. The pursuit directive was also reviewed in 1994 and some content changes made at that time. In addition, the ministry recently provided funding for the acquisition of tire deflation devices to assist in police pursuits in order to enhance public safety. Those are some of the steps the ministry has taken with respect to the issue you've raised.

1420

Mr Ramsay: We all understand that it's the duty of our police officers in Ontario to enforce the law, and we know also that they are very tightly regulated as to when they can commence and continue a high-speed pursuit. But there are other tools — you've mentioned a few of them but there are many more — that we should be equipping our police forces right across this province with. We need to give them those tools so they can carry out their duty with their safety and the safety of the public in mind. With all the alternative measures that are available today for police to capture offenders, some would say we should be reviewing the necessity of high-speed police chases in residential neighbourhoods at all.

Minister, would you give us your commitment today that you will not only review the high-speed chase guidelines in Ontario, but that you will immediately allocate the funding for advanced technology in order to prevent another tragedy like this from happening again?

Hon Mr Flaherty: In response to the member for Timiskaming, as I indicated in my first response, the ministry has provided the funding for the acquisition of tire deflation devices, which may be of some assistance in the situations you raise in your question. Public safety is the paramount consideration, and if the member has some suggestions that might be of some use as this adequacy standard is reviewed, then I'd certainly be pleased to consider them.

The member should know that the guideline is under review as part of the review of adequacy standards generally by the Ministry of the Solicitor General dealing with police services. The public safety aspect, of course, is the first consideration always.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is to the finance minister. In the budget speech you claimed, "We are responding by providing children's aid societies with an additional \$170 million over the next three years." It is our understanding, after having checked with the Ministry of Community and Social Services, that the new money going to children's aid societies' base budgets consists of \$20 million this year, an additional \$40 million next year and an additional \$30 million the following year, so that at the end of three years there is in fact \$90 million in new base budget funding. What the minister has done in his speech is add up cumulative totals in each year to have an inflated number of \$170 million.

Will the Minister of Finance confirm for us today that the \$170 million he claimed to be providing to children's aid societies in last week's budget is really only \$90 million in new base funding?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I have said all along that the total amount of dollars is \$170 million. The member is quite correct that it's \$20 million this year. It is \$60 million next year and it is \$90 million added to the base budget in the third year out. The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies quite understands that. I talked to them about it shortly after the budget, as a matter of fact. Mary McConville was quite appreciative.

Ms Lankin: What they understand is that according to your numbers the increased base budget funding is \$90 million, not the \$170 million that you trumpeted, not the \$170 million that the media and the public and everyone else understood you to be saying, like in so many other areas.

Minister, I have a very important question about that \$90 million —

Hon Mr Eves: No, nobody said the base budget was \$170 million. You are making this up.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister of Finance, come to order, please.

Hon Mr Eves: Mr Speaker, it would be helpful if the honourable member did not make things up.

The Speaker: Minister of Finance, I'm not debating with you.

Ms Lankin: Minister, I have a very serious question about that \$90 million in new base funding. Yesterday the Minister of Community and Social Services said, "One of the challenges, of course, is that the old funding formula, which has existed for many years and under previous governments, has this sort of emergency funding at the end of the year," and she goes on to say that this makes it difficult for calculations.

One of the things we agree with your government about is the need for increased base funding. But we also believe there is a need for exceptional circumstances emergency money at the end of the year to deal with incredible fluctuations in caseloads due to a number of circumstances. We can get into the details of why that happens.

But what I really need to know, Minister, is, will you guarantee that that ECR or contingency fund available to the children's aid societies will not be rolled into that \$90 million in base funding and that this contingency fund will continue to exist? Because, without that, your announcement is a sham.

Hon Mr Eves: The Minister of Community and Social Services will deal with those matters as any other minister in the government deals with their particular budget for their particular ministry. But I want to address the comment that the honourable member for Beaches-Woodbine made at the beginning of her remarks, and that is, nobody ever left the impression or intended to leave the impression — indeed the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies knew full well if she did not — that the increase to the base budget was \$170 million.

The budget document says quite clearly \$170 million over three years. That is what I said in my budget speech. You should clean out your ears. The executive director of the —

The Speaker: Order. Minister of Finance, that is unparliamentary.

Hon Mr Eves: "Ears" is unparliamentary?

The Speaker: Minister of Finance, I'm not having a debate with you. That's unparliamentary. It certainly doesn't bring order to —

Hon Mr Eves: I will withdraw it, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon Mr Eves: You should listen to what is being said very carefully, that is, that the base budget would be increased by \$90 million a year.

Ms Lankin: Is the emergency funding left in or not? Pretty simple.

The Speaker: Member for Beaches-Woodbine, come to order.

Hon Mr Eves: The executive director of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies knows that, understands that and is quite happy with it; apparently you're not.

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mr Bob Wood (London South): My question is for the Attorney General. He is aware of the widespread public dissatisfaction with the Young Offenders Act in its current form and the people's strong desire for a change for the better now.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. I want to be able to hear the member for London South, and I'm finding it very difficult.

Mr Bob Wood: We hear that the federal government will announce discussions about YOA changes today, but

that there will be no specifics. Surely the time for talk is ended and the time for action is now. Is the Attorney General prepared to ask the federal government to produce a draft YOA bill now?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): We have been pressing the federal government for almost three years now to deal with the Young Offenders Act because every person in Ontario knows that the Young Offenders Act is a joke. The Young Offenders Act has not worked properly, it has not kept communities safe, and we have asked the federal government repeatedly to create an act that redefines young offenders so that youths 16 and older can be prosecuted as adults.

We've advised that if the maximum age is not changed, then to legislate the mandatory transfer to adult court of 16- and 17-year-olds. We've asked for the provision for the prosecution of youths under the age of 12 for serious violent offences. We've asked to restrict access to free legal counsel to ensure that parents who meet provincial legal aid eligibility requirements pay for the representation of a young person. We've asked for youths to be transferred to adult court to have the same parole eligibility requirements as adult offenders.

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon Mr Harnick: We have been asking the federal government to deal with this issue for three years. We hope that —

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr Bob Wood: I'm pleased to see that the minister takes this seriously. I think there are some in the opposition who don't think the public is concerned about this, and they are. What date would the minister see as an appropriate and reasonable goal for these YOA changes to be effective?

Hon Mr Harnick: We have been pressing the federal government to make meaningful changes to the act. It's very important that these changes be made. We have consistently taken the position that the Young Offenders Act does not work and we have asked the federal government to deal with creating an act that will listen to the representations that have been made by people all over this country.

We've appeared before parliamentary committees. We've written a 15-point proposal to the Minister of Justice. We hope that she's going to listen. We hope that the Liberal Party of Ontario will get on the bandwagon and support these changes because they're long overdue. They know, as does the third party, that the Young Offenders Act has not worked. It's a failed experiment. It's looked upon as a joke by the people of Ontario who cannot feel safe in their communities as long as this act exists.

1430

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): My question is for the Minister of Education. It's becoming clear that the community school is going to be one of the casualties of

your funding formula for education. School boards are anguished over what schools they're going to have to close because you're not providing enough money to heat and to light and to clean their schools.

In Niagara they're looking at the closure of as many as 35 schools. Toronto is facing the closure of as many as 120 of its schools. In Hamilton-Wentworth your colleague Tony Skarica wants the board to close schools in inner-city Hamilton so kids in Waterdown won't have to be bused out of their community, and that's what you've done. You've put the welfare of students in one community up against the welfare of students in another community. The Hamilton-Wentworth board would have to close 12 schools in inner-city Hamilton just to build one school in Waterdown to get the kids out of the portables.

Minister, don't try to tell us that this is a local board decision. Will you acknowledge that you are forcing a massive shutdown of schools and that you'll be loading kids on buses and shipping them out of communities right across this province?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): I'm not closing any schools. The province of Ontario —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Come to order.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): Alan Eagleson is acting up at boot camp and you Tories are not doing anything about it. What are you going to do about Alan Eagleson? I want these Tory miscreants dealt with in jail. Alan Eagleson is thumbing his nose at you in jail and he is your past party president.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon David Johnson: Mr Speaker, I'm not sure if the question was from the member for Renfrew North or the member for Fort William now, but I'll answer all of them.

The reality is that we have a basic difference of opinion with the opposition. We think more money should go into the classroom. That's exactly where the moneys are headed. We think school boards should be efficient and effective. We have allowed school boards more than enough money to look after their schools, more than enough money to accommodate the students' needs, and then we think that the money should be focused on the classroom, focused towards the teachers, the textbooks, the supplies going into the classroom, for a better education for our young people.

Mrs McLeod: Minister, you have the control you wanted. You set all the terms and conditions, and you and Mike Harris are solely responsible for what is happening out there.

What is happening in Ottawa-Carleton is that they're looking at having to close 20 schools. What makes it even worse is that they have to close them, according to your rules, by September 1. That's when you cut off the funding for the heat and the light and the cleaning of what you now call surplus space. The problem is, there are students in those spaces and there are parents who want their children to stay in their neighbourhood school and who are

going to be very upset when you insist that their kids are going to have to be bused somewhere else so you can save money on what you call your non-classroom expenditures.

Minister, the Carleton board says they can't close these schools overnight. Every other board is saying the same thing. Will you suspend your totally unrealistic deadlines and provide enough money to keep these schools open for at least a year so reasonable plans for kids can be made?

Hon David Johnson: I've had the opportunity to talk to many, many representatives of schools — staff, trustees, other representatives — and I can say that in terms of the amount of time that schools will have to come to grips with various solutions, we're looking at that and I'm going to be more than cooperative in terms of assisting them to make the kinds of decisions they need to make.

I wonder if the member for Fort William remembers a gentleman by the name of John Sweeney. John Sweeney was the former cabinet minister who worked with the member for Fort William. John Sweeney was hired by the NDP to do a study of our school system, and John Sweeney, colleague of the member for Fort William, came to the conclusion that indeed we needed to spend more money in the classroom. Too much money was being spent on administration and non-classroom activities.

I agree with John Sweeney. I agree with the former minister from the Liberal Party: We need to put more money into the classroom, more money towards teachers, more money towards our students.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

M. Gilles Bisson (Cochrane-Sud): Ma question est au procureur général. Vous savez que présentement, un francophone accusé d'une infraction provinciale a le droit à un procès en français. Suite aux pressions du NPD, vous avez proposé un amendement à votre Loi 108 visant à répondre à nos préoccupations. Nous croyons que même avec votre amendement, les francophones vont perdre ce droit.

Ma question est celle-ci : Est-ce que vous êtes capable de nous garantir aujourd'hui qu'avec votre amendement, les francophones auront exactement les mêmes droits qui leur sont présentement accordés ?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Yes.

M. Bisson : Monsieur le procureur, je suis en désaccord avec vous. J'ai ici une opinion légale du conseil législatif, et je vais vous la lire. Je la lis tel qu'elle était écrite :

"Failure to provide a bilingual prosecutor in accordance with an agreement might not invalidate a proceeding in every case, but it would invalidate a proceeding if the failure resulted in prejudice to the defendant's right to a fair hearing.

"This issue of whether the right to a fair hearing was prejudiced would depend on the particular circumstance of the case. It might be relevant, for example, whether a French-speaking defendant was also fluently English."

C'est clair. L'opinion qu'on m'a donnée dit que vous n'êtes pas en train de garantir les droits des francophones tels qu'ils existent présentement. Êtes-vous préparé à accepter notre amendement qu'on a mis déjà ou à écrire un amendement du gouvernement qui protégerait clairement les droits des francophones ?

Hon Mr Harnick: Certainly the proposal that we have made is a proposal that both AFMO and AJEFO have worked on developing with us. They are quite satisfied that it provides the protection they need to be assured that the existing level of services will be guaranteed when municipalities take over the prosecution of provincial offences.

The other aspect is that if one takes a look at the memorandum of understanding that would be referenced in the act, certainly we've enumerated all of those issues of due process, and provision in the French language is specifically one of those issues of due process, therefore guaranteeing the existing level of service.

1440

DAIRY FARMERS

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): My question today is for the Minister of Agriculture. Recently, I spoke with various farm operators in my riding of Simcoe East. In the group were several fellow dairy farmers. I learned that they have lost 3% of their milk quota due to imported dairy byproducts coming in from the United States. Are you aware of how the importation of butter oil-sugar blends into Ontario is hurting the milk quota of our dairy farmers?

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I recognize the importance of the butter oil-sugar blends, that it is of great interest to our dairy producers and indeed to our ice cream manufacturers.

The federal government, through the Canadian International Trade Tribunal, has established a process, and all the issues are expected to be addressed. I am pleased to see that the Dairy Farmers of Ontario have agreed to participate in that process. It is of great importance to the dairy industry. I've had the opportunity of discussing this with my federal colleague and I appreciate the fact that he now has a committee at the CITT looking into it.

Mr McLean: This product, containing 49% butter oil and 51% sugar, is used in the manufacture of ice cream in Ontario. It is obviously a butter substitute, as the Dairy Farmers of Canada have been arguing, and should be required to pay the proper import tariff. If allowed to continue, the dairy farmers I spoke with estimate an additional loss of milk quota. You know how serious this could be for Ontario's respected dairy industry.

Minister, what measures has your ministry taken to support our dairy farmers in reclassifying this important butter byproduct?

Hon Mr Villeneuve: The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has made a submission to the CITT and has asked to examine all the options very

closely. I am pleased that the Dairy Farmers of Canada are also participating in this committee to air all the possible solutions. I certainly encourage the tribunal to continue to consider all the options and take into account the needs of everyone involved, including the dairy farmers, the processors and certainly the consumers. We're looking for a resolution that takes into consideration the interests of the entire industry, and this committee will have its findings published at the beginning of July.

ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS AND TRADES

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. You're aware that your door is shut to hundreds of new Canadian immigrants with professional degrees ready to make a contribution to Ontario, but the only jobs they can find are as taxi drivers, cleaners and pizza delivery people.

Your Premier made a commitment and a promise in 1995 to take strict action to deal with access to professions and trades. To this day, we see your actions in terms of equal opportunity. What are they? You destroyed employment equity legislation. You cut the Cabinet Round Table on Anti-Racism, then you killed the Employment Equity Commission and then you cancelled the Ontario Advisory Council on Disability Issues.

Minister, I have in my hand recommendations by an organization called Skills for Change, which outline what you could do so that the doors of opportunity will not be shut to those who have professional qualifications. Will you accept these recommendations from Skills for Change?

Hon Isabel Bassett (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): First of all, I want to say that this government believes strongly in the contributions that immigrants can make to our society. I'm glad you asked the question, because I believe we as a society have not gone far enough yet to accommodate people who come here seeking to use the skills they used and developed in other countries.

That said, we are working, and I am pushing up our attempts to work even faster so we can make sure that citizens who have been trained elsewhere in the world have their skills recognized here. Right now, the system, according to the report that came out, has not been adequate, and we are studying that. York University and the University of Toronto have had it set up within the system to judge various skills —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Ms Bassett: — and we are looking to upgrade that system. We are also looking at an independent organization that could judge the qualifications of various —

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr Ruprecht: I find this answer really very inadequate. You are saying, if I hear you correctly, that you are studying this. Look, your Premier made a commitment and a promise in 1995, and you know the Minister of

Finance's mantra when he read the budget speech: "A promise made, a promise kept."

We know that the Premier clearly made the commitment in 1995 and said, "We're going to act on this very swiftly." You are today telling me, three years later, that you are still studying this matter while your door is being hammered on by hundreds of people trying to get into the system. You say you are studying it.

You have to realize, obviously, that this is not good enough. The immigrants made a commitment to you a year ago that they were going to give you recommendations.

The Speaker: Question, please.

Mr Ruprecht: The recommendations are right here, and they say that there's a lack of appropriate licensing and language tests. Let's act on it. There's a lack of training —

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon Ms Bassett: We do keep our promises. The ministry commissioned a study by Price Waterhouse; in fact, the final report was just submitted April 6, 1998. It concludes that the existing services do not have credibility and wide acceptance among employers. Now that we have taken the first step to determine what the services had to offer and where they fell short, we are now looking at in-house assessments conducted by regulatory bodies and educational institutions and we are seeing what they have to offer. As I said before, they do not use a standard and consistent methodology. Now that we have the results from the report, we are starting to act on it.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): My question is to the Minister of Finance. Last week you tabled Bill 16, which tries to fix the disastrous mess you've made of the whole property tax reassessment scheme. Your first try at this brought thousands of small businesses in Toronto to the brink of bankruptcy, and now, as I said, you're trying to fix this problem through Bill 16.

But we see one problem your bill creates: In capping business tax increases at 2.5%, you've moved the cost of the download of your services on to homeowners. Because, as we understand it from the legislation, the cap applies to all increases, not just to those caused by the assessment, you will be making homeowners pay the cost of the download all by themselves. Some owners, we know, are going to be getting increases as high as 100%.

Minister, you have finally taken the steps to protect businesses and landlords from exorbitant increases. Why would you not take the same steps with respect to protecting homeowners?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): If the honourable member is talking about the city of Toronto, which I presume he is, he will certainly be knowledgeable of the fact that the city of Toronto has come out with a no-increase budget for this year with respect to taxpayers in the city of Toronto. They've also said that they don't see any reason why they'll have to raise taxes for the next three years, and neither do we.

Mr Silipo: The issue is not so much the budget of the city; the issue is the tax assessment and the reassessment and the changes within that. This is where the problem is, which you created. We all support the tax relief for small businesses. We in fact were among the ones who were telling you to do more than what you've done, so we're not arguing with you on that.

But the reality is that your changes are leaving home owners out in the cold. Because businesses will get a 2.5% cap not only on assessment-based increases but on other increases as well, it leaves the municipalities no room but to shift on to homeowners the cost of the download. That's going to apply here in Toronto and it's going to apply in other municipalities. In community after community, whether it's in Sarnia, in Windsor, in Sudbury, in Niagara, Bruce county, Kitchener, and we could go on, we're going to see municipality after municipality having to choose to protect their businesses through capping, and if they choose to do that, then homeowners will not get the protection.

Minister, will you agree to amendments in the legislation that will ensure the same protection for homeowners that you're prepared to give to businesses?

1450

Hon Mr Eves: First of all, the honourable member said it's the assessment base increase that he's worried about. Then he talks about the Who Does What exercise in the preamble to both his first and second question. If you're talking about the Who Does What exercise, the city of Toronto has said they will not increase taxes this year or for the next three years. The overwhelming majority of municipalities in Ontario are already on a market value/fair value assessment base system: some 1992, some 1988, some 1984, but the overwhelming majority, about 90% of Ontario municipalities, are already there.

We recognized that there is a problem with respect to municipalities that haven't had a reassessment for a long time, like the city of Toronto since 1940, and therefore we introduced the 2.5% cap, especially for small business owners and small business people in the municipal option. Those municipalities that don't choose that option, and the overwhelming majority will be those, obviously have dealt with this in the past.

HIGHWAY SIGNS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, I'd like to first just thank you for putting \$820 million in the budget for our Ontario highways.

Over the last year I've seen new directional signs for tourism operators and businesses erected on highways —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): There's a question left here. I ask the members to stop their conversations.

Member for Durham East, your question was to?

Mr O'Toole: The Minister of Transportation.

The Speaker: Go ahead, please.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you, Mr Speaker. On our highways, like the 401 and Highway 12 through my riding, I've noticed the new tourism signs, and they are well received. All the constituents of mine, like Ocala Wines and Cullen Gardens, have really responded well. However, since they started this program, I've also had owners of food, fuel and accommodation businesses approach me wondering what you're going to do to allow them to be included in this signage in Ontario.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Transportation): I thank the honourable member for Durham East for his question, and indeed I was very pleased to be present at the Ontario Hotel and Motel Association conference on May 3 when the Premier of Ontario announced the implementation of the logo signage system for the province. After a wait of perhaps 20 years, they finally got what they were asking for and what the public is demanding. The logo signage system will replace generic icons used to indicate accommodations, food and fuel outlets with signs showing the corporate logo.

We recognize as a government that accommodation, food and fuel employers are providing an important service to the travelling public, and motorists need to be aware of these services. As well, these employers are providing jobs, opportunities and growth to our province. Consequently, we are pleased to announce this program. In the words of Rod Seiling, president of the Ontario Hotel and Motel Association, "Logo signage is a win-win initiative as it provides an essential service to the travelling public by giving them information on services they have long said is important." We are pleased to announce that accommodation.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I'd like to give notification under standing order 37(a) of an unsatisfactory answer to my question earlier.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): File the appropriate papers.

PETITIONS

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr Gilles E. Morin (Carleton East): I have a petition which reads as follows:

"Whereas nurses in Ontario often experience coercion to participate in practices which directly contravene their deeply held ethical standards; and

"Whereas pharmacists in Ontario are often pressured to dispense and/or sell chemicals and/or devices contrary to their moral or religious beliefs; and

"Whereas public health workers in Ontario are expected to assist in providing controversial services and

promoting controversial materials against their consciences; and

"Whereas physicians in Ontario often experience pressure to give referrals for medications, treatments and/or procedures which they believe to be gravely immoral; and

"Whereas competent health care workers and students in various health care disciplines in Ontario have been denied training, employment, continued employment and advancement in their intended fields and suffered other forms of unjust discrimination because of the dictates of their consciences; and

"Whereas the health care workers experiencing such unjust discrimination have at present no practical and accessible legal means to protect themselves;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers, prohibiting coercion of and unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary to the dictates of their consciences and establishing penalties for such coercion and unjust discrimination."

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government wants to take up to an additional \$1 billion out of the education system this year and every year; and

"Whereas the Ontario government will remove up to 10,000 teachers from classrooms across the province; and

"Whereas the Ontario government will have unbridled regulatory powers over public education; and

"Whereas the Ontario government wishes to remove the right to negotiate student learning conditions; and

"Whereas the Ontario government proposes to undermine shared decision-making among students, parents, educators, trustees and taxpayers;

"We, the undersigned Ontario residents, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to withdraw Bill 160."

I've signed the petition.

ABORTION

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from residents in Grey and Bruce area.

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury, or illness, and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has the exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

DIABETES EDUCATION SERVICES

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): I have a petition that reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the diabetes education services at the Lake of the Woods District Hospital in Kenora, Ontario is an essential component of health care, we, the undersigned, petition the Minister of Health of Ontario as follows:

"For permanent funding for the diabetes education services at the Lake of the Woods District Hospital."

I certainly have attached my name to that petition as well.

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph): In the interest of brevity and allowing other members to present petitions, the petition that I wish to submit on behalf of over 100 of my constituents is identical to that just submitted by the member for Carleton East. On their behalf, I present this for consideration in the House.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): If you like, you don't have to read the petition. You can summarize it if you want to make it shorter as well.

CHIROPRACTIC HEALTH CARE

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I have a petition to the Legislature signed by hundreds of people, and it says as follows:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health has recently strengthened its reputation as the Ministry of Medicine through its \$1.7-billion three-year agreement with the Ontario Medical Association; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is restricting access to alternative cost-saving treatments for patients of the province; and

"Whereas two recent reports commissioned by the Ministry of Health called for increased OHIP funding to improve patient access to chiropractic services on the grounds of safety, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness; and

"Whereas over one million Ontario adults now use chiropractic services annually, increasingly those with higher incomes, because of the cost barrier caused by government underfunding; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has shown blatant disregard for the needs of the citizens of Ontario in restricting funding for chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to recognize the contribution made by chiropractors

to the good health of the people of Ontario, to recognize the taxpayer dollars saved by the use of low-cost preventive care such as that provided by chiropractors and to recognize that to restrict funding for chiropractic health care only serves to limit access to a needed health care service."

I have affixed by signature to this document.

1500

COMPENSATION FOR HEPATITIS C PATIENTS

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): This petition concerns the hepatitis C compensation debate that's going on.

"I, the undersigned, am in support of a compensation package jointly funded by the federal and provincial governments for all victims of the hepatitis C tainted blood tragedy. Further, the compensating committee should have as part of its members a fair representation of hepatitis C victims.

In Canada, today, Saskatchewan is the only province to offer medical assistance to hepatitis C patients. This disease can remain dormant for approximately 20 years, but can become chronic, requiring costly medical assistance, potentially leading to loss of employment and causing severe emotional stress.

The financial and emotional burden placed on these Canadians is unthinkable! The stigma which is associated with this disease still plagues thousands across this country. Without compensation, Canadians will continue to suffer and die through no fault of their own. This tragedy must stop!"

There are about 50 petitions, all the same, signed by people of my community of Sault Ste Marie, and I affix my signature to them as well.

ABORTION

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): I have a number of petitions from members of my parish of St Leonard's in Brampton.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas abortion is a lifestyle choice which is never medically necessary; and

"Whereas the Ontario government's injunction against 18 pro-life citizens initiated by the NDP in 1993 is an unwarranted suppression of free speech and of peaceful and lawful activity; and

"Whereas health care workers are experiencing coercion to participate in procedures contrary to their consciences and unfair discrimination for acting according to their consciences;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That public funding of abortion should cease, that the injunction against pro-life witnessing should be dropped

and that the conscientious rights of health care workers be given new, explicit protection in the law."

I have signed my signature to that.

LINHAVEN HOME FOR THE AGED

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition signed by a number of St Catharines residents. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Linhaven Home for the Aged has provided excellent service to seniors in St Catharines for many years; and

"Whereas the staff and volunteers at Linhaven have endeavoured to enhance the quality of life of residents of the home through their kind and compassionate care; and

"Whereas cuts in funding to Linhaven will result in a reduction of staff and resources available to meet the needs of seniors who reside in the home; and

"Whereas the discharging of acute care patients from active treatment hospitals results in medical staff at homes for the aged being required to provide more extensive and intensive care to patients who are discharged from hospitals; and

"Whereas Linhaven and other homes for the aged have among the residents more individuals afflicted with Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease and other medical conditions which require an appropriate complement of staff and necessary equipment to meet their medical needs;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the government of Ontario increase funding to Linhaven Home for the Aged in St Catharines so that the medical requirements of Linhaven residents may be properly addressed and seniors may live in dignity in our community."

I affix my signature to this petition, as I'm in full agreement with its contents.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have petitions signed and forwarded to me by members of CEP Local 32 in Smooth Rock Falls. This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas each year in Ontario approximately 300 workers are killed on the job, several thousand die of occupational diseases and 400,000 suffer work-related injuries and illnesses; and

"Whereas during the past decade the Workers' Health and Safety Centre proved to be the most cost-effective WCB-funded prevention organization dedicated to worker health and safety concerns; and

"Whereas the WCB provides over 80% of its legislated prevention funding to several employer-controlled safety associations and less than 20% to the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre recently lost several million dollars in funding and course revenue due to government changes to legislated training requirements; and

"Whereas 30% of Workers' Health and Safety Centre staff were laid off due to these lost training funds; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre now faces an additional 25% cut to its 1998 budget, which will be used to augment new funding for employer safety associations in the health, education and services sector; and

"Whereas the WCB's 1998 planned baseline budget cuts for safety associations and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre will be disproportionately against the workers' centre and reduce its 1998 budget allocation to less than 15% of the WCB prevention funding;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the WCB's proposed cuts and direct the WCB to increase the Workers' Health and Safety Centre's funding to at least 50% of the WCB's legislated prevention funding; and

"Further we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the WCB to significantly increase its legislated prevention funding in order to eliminate workplace illness, injury and death."

I continue to support these workers and their petitions.

ABORTION

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I submit to the House signatures on a petition requesting that public tax funds not be used for abortions in Ontario hospitals.

"Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has the exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

I hereby affix my signature to this.

INSTITUTE OF PSYCHOTHERAPY

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I have another petition that deals with the health care cuts that are currently going on. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas a report has been submitted by the Health Services Restructuring Commission recommending the closure of the Institute of Psychotherapy, established over 30 years ago" in Kingston, Ontario, "an 18-bed cost-effective hospital which provides voluntary treatment to patients with resistant depression disorders to learn to cope with their problems" at a cost of \$130 per day of

"provincial funding, an average of 25% of the cost of other psychiatric treatment centres; and

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"Whereas the Institute of Psychotherapy supplies efficient and effective short-term care to residents of Kingston and the surrounding area, it also provides their service to patients from Ottawa, Cornwall" and other communities. This hospital also provides anonymity to health care professionals who would/could otherwise face receiving treatment at their place of employment with colleagues or, the worst scenario, not seek the lifesaving treatment they require;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the September 1998 closure of the Institute of Psychotherapy...and that they review the cost-efficient and effective short-term care provided to patients who would not/could not seek treatment for this life-threatening illness. As a result of their work, this hospital provides a much-needed service to the community and an inexpensive operation to the province of Ontario as a whole."

I have put my signature on the petition as well, as I'm in full agreement.

AGGREGATE EXTRACTION

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I have a petition of 1,261 signatures from the town of Caledon addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature not to grant an aggregate licence to James Dick Construction Ltd that would allow mining of the Rockford property at Olde Base Line and Winston Churchill Boulevard in the town of Caledon for the following reasons:

"Current monitoring technology is unable to guarantee the water table would not be compromised; haul routes would force gravel trucks to travel the same routes as 29 school buses; the unique character of our community would change dramatically; and aggregate extraction would jeopardize the day tourist traffic currently visiting to the town of Caledon."

I have signed this petition.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Acting Speaker (Ms Frances Lankin): Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Cochrane South has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Attorney General concerning Bill 108. This matter will be debated today at 6 pm.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

1998 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the adjourned debate on the amendment to the amendment to the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): A budget debate is always a very interesting one. I would like to do something today at the outset which relates to another matter that I raised on Thursday, in which I apparently misstated a situation. I want to correct the record. It doesn't happen too often in this House, but I thought I would just correct the record.

I stated in my statement on tourism last Thursday that the chair of the Greater Kingston Chamber of Commerce, Mrs Elaine Viner, "slammed her fist on the desk when Attorney General Harnick visited yesterday." That is apparently not so. She slammed her fist on the desk before he came in. Knowing Mrs Viner the way I do, I know she would never do that while a minister of the crown is present. I just wanted to correct that error.

On the other hand, it does show how important tourism dollars are in our various communities, and that was the main purpose of the statement then, as it is now. I would once again urge the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism to make most of the tourist money available to the individual communities, whether it's through the chambers of commerce, the visitors and convention bureaus or whatever it may be, because I think those organisations know best how to spend that money.

The real concern was that the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism said that before he would allocate any of these funds, he was going to take a Yours to Discover Ontario tour within a week or so. I would say that probably the minister has seen Ontario from top to bottom in his various capacities over the last three years. It is very important to get that money out as quickly as possible. Tourist promotion should happen now. It shouldn't happen some time in July or August when people have already made their holiday plans. If you're going to do it, do it now. That's the first point I want to make.

The \$262,000 that has been brought into the system for tourist promotion of course is very helpful in eastern Ontario, but you've got to remember that was ice storm money and the federal government contributed substantially to that fund as well.

The other issue I want to raise is this piece of propaganda that has gone to every household in Ontario. I know that last week we were under the impression it only went to certain people, but it looks now as if it went to every household in the province. I know the Speaker has ruled on this and the Integrity Commissioner is currently looking at it.

Just in case there's any misunderstanding that the people of Ontario may have out there as to whether or not this is sort of like a government householder, people should understand that all of us have within our budgets the possibility of sending householders to people within our own ridings. People may get confused. They may think, "Does the government now send out householders?" This is just blatant political propaganda and the people of Ontario should know that taxpayers' dollars are used to distribute this Reform government's information and self-congratulatory comments on what's happening in Ontario.

I don't think it's a fair way to handle the situation at all. If the government feels it needs propaganda in order to talk about its policies or whatever it wants to do, let it use its own party funding that it has available to it. We all know they're raising millions of dollars from their fundraisers. Use some of that money. I don't think government money should be used for this kind of propaganda.

If you want to send out a brochure that strictly sets out the facts of a particular program that you've initiated, that's one thing, but when you make all sorts of editorial comments about how wonderful some of the programs are that you've introduced, then that becomes just blatant political propaganda and it's totally unacceptable to use government money to send that to each person in Ontario. As my friend from St Catharines indicated, look what the Ottawa Citizen said in its editorial yesterday:

"Take the slick pamphlet pictured at the left," which is this pamphlet right here. "It's full of puffery about how great tax cuts are, how much we'll love the rural jobs strategy (for which, read 'small-town slush fund'), and how things in general are just swell with the Tories in charge.

"It went to almost every household in the province, almost 4 million of them, and cost \$750,000," and yes, the Ontario taxpayer paid for it."

It's not appropriate. You can laugh about it, but it is simply not appropriate to use government money to send out this kind of propaganda. Of course we know that David Lindsay, the former principal secretary in the Premier's office, is now the head of this organization, which I guess is to promote the Ontario government in some fashion. Anyway, it's totally inappropriate and I hope the people of Ontario will take issue with the government on that.

I see that time is moving on. As you all know, under the rules nowadays the opposition has been muffled and muzzled, because we cannot speak as long as we want to on such an intricate document as the budget. We've been limited to 20 minutes for personal debate on an issue like this, which is totally shocking. But there is one other thing I want to draw your attention to. It happened last week and was truly an extraordinary event for about 2,000 Ontarians who live in island communities.

You may recall that I and others have been saying in this House for the last two years, ever since this government brought in the notion that the island communities should look after their own ferry fee funding, that there is no way those local smaller municipalities have the finan-

cial wherewithal to fund the ferry systems that operate back and forth to these islands. As a matter of fact, the money that's realized in property taxes on the islands is somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$300,000 to \$400,000, and to fund these ferry systems you need about \$2 million, so they would have to raise taxes four- or five- or sixfold.

The Minister of Transportation, both the present minister and the former minister, have been stonewalling this. They've been saying: "We're cutting you off as of December 31. As of then you are no longer part of Ontario. We are no longer going to pay for your ferry system." December 31 came along and they said, "Well, okay, we're going to do it on March 31." In the meantime, these people have been living in great anxiety and great fear because their livelihood, their whole way of life, is at stake. We're talking about people whose ancestors have lived and worked and farmed on these islands for something like seven or eight generations.

Lo and behold, what happened last Thursday on CBC Ottawa, on the noonhour show? The Minister of Finance was interviewed by a reporter, questioned by somebody who phoned in from the island, and the minister said, "I believe the province should take over the responsibility for the ferry service because municipalities do not have the wherewithal to handle the cost." That is what Ernie Eves said last Thursday on the noonhour show.

Mr W. Leo Jordan (Lanark-Renfrew): What's wrong with that?

Mr Gerretsen: What's wrong with that? That's what I'd like to know, because Ernie Eves is right: They do not have the financial capacity to pay for these services. All I would suggest, once again, is that the Minister of Finance, who I always thought had an awful lot of power within cabinet, to get together with the Minister of Transportation and straighten this matter out so we can bring some sense of certainty to the people who live in these island communities and not say to 2,000 people in this province, "I'm sorry, we can no longer afford you." I agree with the Minister of Finance on that. The local municipalities do not have the financial wherewithal to afford it, so I hope he wins his battle with the Minister of Transportation.

1520

Now let's take a look at the budget. The first thing I always look at is what has happened to the public debt in this province. This is probably one of the greatest inconsistencies in the present government's position. They like to give the image that they are a business party and that they want to run the province in a businesslike fashion. For the life of me, I cannot understand how a government that wants to run the province in a businesslike fashion can possibly give people tax cuts when you're still running a deficit every year. The annual deficit, you see, gets added to the public debt on an annual basis.

What has happened in the province of Ontario between 1995 and currently? The public debt of this province has increased from \$89 billion to \$105 billion, an increase of \$16 billion per year. Let's just take a look at what the interest is on the public debt. What's the interest on the

public debt? Amazing. It has gone up from \$7.8 billion paid in 1995 to a projected \$9.2 billion that will be paid in the current year, an increase of \$1.4 billion just in the interest payments.

What's fascinating about this and what I think the people of Ontario should really reflect upon is that we pay more on the interest on the public debt than we do for social services in this province. It's \$9.2 billion that's projected to be paid on the interest on the public debt and the community and social services budget is \$7.8 billion. I find it totally incongruous that a party that prides itself on doing things in a businesslike fashion could possibly do that sort of thing.

The other thing that is very interesting to note is that they always like to blame the federal government. That's another good one. I want to address this. Some of my colleagues said, "Don't talk about it," but I want to talk about it. It is true that the transfer payments from the federal government have been reduced by about \$2 billion over the last four to five years. But it's a little reminiscent of that famous television debate that took place between Brian Mulroney and John Turner — you may recall; I think it was in 1984 — when there were certain patronage appointments, which I won't get into right now, and Mr Mulroney said: "But, sir, you had a choice. You could have done something about it." It's exactly the same thing here.

You've got to remember that transfer payments are no longer in particular envelopes. We no longer have an envelope for health care or an envelope for social services. The provinces now can do whatever they want with those transfer payments. What did this government do? They're complaining about the fact there's \$2 billion less, but what did they do? They gave a tax cut anyway. They had a choice either to give the money away in a tax cut or they could have said, "We're getting less from the federal government; therefore, we cannot afford a tax cut because we really care about good, quality health care and quality education services."

Premier, finance minister, you had a choice. Let's not hear any more about the fact that the feds reduced the transfer payments. They're also totally unconditional. You can do with that money what you want. You had a choice. You did not want to use that money for health care and social services. You decided to give that money back to the people of Ontario by way of a tax cut. It's very interesting that the amount of the tax cut is equal to the amount of the transfer payment from the feds to the province.

Let's just go on. The other thing that I find very interesting —

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Order, please.

Mr Gerretsen: I must congratulate the members for being so wide awake and listening to this speech. It obviously hit a bit of a nerve or a sore point with them, because they seem to be very agitated about these things. Both the government members and the members of the third party are agitated about it.

The other thing that I always find very interesting is how the government —

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Could I ask the House to come to order, please. I would ask the member for Kingston and The Islands to not provoke the other members of the House and speak directly to the Chair.

Mr Gerretsen: I always like to speak directly to the Chair. I never try to provoke the members in the House, other than through good, stimulating debate and a good discussion of the issues that are before us.

The other thing that I find very interesting is, the government likes to pride itself on the fact that last year they projected a deficit of something like \$5.6 billion and they came in at \$4.2 billion. They say: "Isn't this wonderful? We're \$1.4 billion better off than we thought we'd be." Of course, it's the age-old trick where the Minister of Finance always underestimates certain items, or overestimates the cost of certain items, so that at the end of the year he looks good. All finance ministers do it. They probably do it at the federal House as well. I don't doubt that for a moment.

It's very interesting that out of this \$1.4 billion in which we're better off on the deficit side than what was anticipated, some \$700 million is made up of two categories. One, in the category of capital, \$339 million worth of capital that was included in last year's budget, was money that was never spent. That's very easy to recover; you haven't spent it. That's an easy one. The other one was \$462 million where they expected to pay even more in interest costs than they actually did. That is another one. They probably expected high interest rates or something like that when they estimated the amount they would have to pay last year.

In any event, when the finance minister gets up and says, "Well, isn't it wonderful, what a wonderful job I've done," I would just ask the people of Ontario, take a good close look at the figures and you will see that really there was \$700 million out of that \$1.4 billion that had nothing to do with things other than just plain bookkeeping entries.

There is one other issue that I very briefly want to address — as you well know, there's always so much to say and so little time to say it, particularly, with the House rules the way they are now — it deals with the notion that this government has kept its promises. I know there's a certain public perception out there. I think the people of Ontario —

Interjection.

Mr Gerretsen: Perception in politics sometimes is everything, I agree. But the people of Ontario ought to be made aware of some of the promises that were made that were not kept. The best one that I can think of and that almost everybody in Ontario can relate to is health care costs.

Let's remind the people of Ontario once again that on May 3, 1995, Mr Harris said, "We will not cut one cent from health care," and that he said in that famous television debate, "No, Robert, I do not have a plan to cut hospitals."

Let's look at the reality of the situation. Right now, currently in Ontario, the health care system is in chaos in a lot of communities, driven that way by the government. In community after community, petitions are taken up not to have certain hospitals closed etc, as has been recommended by the Health Services Restructuring Commission. Some \$800 million has already been cut out of health care.

You've already taken out \$1.4 billion since you took over health care, and the interesting thing is that the government somehow figures that their \$1-billion promise last week in the budget, where in effect they're saying, "We're going to spend \$1 billion in long-term-care beds" — what people seem to forget very quickly is that's over eight years. It's kind of like saying, "I'm going to take \$10 from you today and I'm going to give \$10 back to you, but I'm going to give that to you over the next 10 years." I don't think that's quite the same way —

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): You are stretching it again as you go.

Mr Gerretsen: It's exactly what's happening here. In effect, only \$125 million per year is going to be allocated out of that more than \$1 billion that you've taken out of the health care system.

Of course we could talk about user fees. "Under this plan," the Premier said, "there will be no new user fees." What happened? Just ask the senior citizens in this province and they will tell you that the user fees that have been imposed through the drug benefit plan are certainly hurting them, and they are directly contrary to the promise that the Premier made. So to the tune of some \$225 million — I see my time is up, Madam Speaker. I wish I could go on, because there's so much to say about this budget and really such little time to say it in.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much.

1530

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I would like everyone to have the opportunity to hear the responses, so I'm wondering if there's a quorum present.

The Deputy Speaker: Clerk, could you check and see if there's a quorum, please.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the comments of the member for Kingston and The Islands. I always enjoy his spirited remarks in this place. Many times, given the fact that we both have a municipal background, I find myself agreeing with him.

When he talks about the government's budget and what it's really about, I don't disagree at all with the vast majority of his analysis. However, I do want to point out that while he was speaking, he inadvertently used the word "muffled" when referring to the kinds of speeches and public comments that they're now allowed to make, all of us in opposition, because the government changed the rules of this place and severely limited our ability to offer

up alternative thinking to the government of the day. He of course meant to say "muzzled" rather than "muffled," but I did think in some ways it was somewhat apropos because muffling and sliding are a part of where the Libs are on this thing.

I'm not surprised that they're really angry at you for this budget, and for many of the same reasons as us in the NDP, but for one key political reason, and that is that you really cut the legs out from under them when they played the little game of saying, "Just don't implement the last part of the tax cut," and somehow that left them on progressive territory. Now that you've moved that up, they don't have that, and the question has to be asked: Are you going to repeal that last tax cut, let alone the rest of it?

Of course there's a difference between our party and theirs on that issue, but on that last piece — they were so strong about it — it begs the very direct question: Since you opposed it before the budget, do you, the Liberal caucus, believe that last tax cut ought to be repealed? Answer that so we can see where you're going to get the money for all the money you want to spend.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I was really quite entertained by the member for Kingston and The Islands, but particularly by the member for Hamilton Centre, who just responded, saying he totally agrees with the Liberals. You know, birds of a kind flock together. I can just see the two working together in another coalition coming up.

The member for Kingston and The Islands talked about the government operating as a business. I'm really pleased that he's recognizing that and how we are developing business plans with each of the ministries. In fact, it's working very well.

He talked a lot about the tax cuts, and I'm rather pleased that he did, recognizing things like the income tax cut that will be completed by July 1. He talked about some of the payroll taxes, such as the employer health tax, which will be completed by July 1; also the provincial sales tax on building materials for farmers — that's going to be continued for another year — and made reference to the new home registry costs for new home buyers. Certainly that is stimulating home sales and construction. There are all kinds of jobs coming there, a tremendous amount of investment by farmers. You may have noticed with the employer health tax being reduced how many jobs have been created, some 350,000 jobs since this party came into government.

I can understand why you're concerned about tax cuts, because when your party was in government from 1985 to 1990 —

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): How many tax increases?

Mr Galt: It's not the number of tax increases, but the number for tax freedom day. It moved from May 25 to June 21, the most in the history of this country, while you were in government. That tax-and-spend government that you have a reputation for — when it came to the NDP they didn't have the intestinal fortitude to put up the taxes. They just borrowed the money, so they're really the

spend-and-borrow party. So tax and spend joins spend and borrow, and look what we ended up with after 10 years.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I commend my colleague from Kingston and The Islands for his speech. It is always effervescent and illuminating, to say the least.

I would like to underline his point about the new, supposedly — I don't know what this is — Jobs and the Economy. I don't know whether this is a council or whether this is a commission. It looks like a brochure, and I've seen brochures from Tory members that are less biased and less partisan than what's in this. This is something that every single household, apparently, has received in this province to the tune of \$750,000. So \$750,000 from taxpayers' money to do something that the Progressive Conservative Party should be doing on its own. I find that abhorrent.

We're going to dig into this. We're not leaving this issue. We're going to find out what the terms of reference are. We're going to find out who the people are who were appointed to this and what was their basis and who heads it up. You might be interested to know that the former principal secretary and the former campaign manager of the Conservative Party — five years as principal secretary of the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party. Prior to that Mr Lindsay was director of research and communications for the PC caucus at Queen's Park.

You say to me that this ain't so. I have never seen such partisan stuff in this House from any commission. No commission would ever say this. The taxpayers of this province are paying for that. You should be ashamed of yourselves, and I'm sure some of you are. Anybody with any ethics would stand up and bring this to the Premier's attention. This is some of the worst abuse of political power I've ever seen in this country.

Mr Wildman: I listened carefully to my friend from Kingston and The Islands, who put forward his views on the budget, and he said at one point that he didn't want to hear any more about the cuts in transfer payments by the federal government because provinces, he said, and he's correct on this, have been given flexibility and leeway in how they spend the transfers. But that doesn't get away from the fact that the total amount has been cut substantially by the federal government for the province of Ontario.

But since he doesn't want to hear any more about that, I would like to follow through with the question I raised as an interjection, and then my friend from Hamilton Centre raised, and that is, what is any Liberal government, or any Liberal Party hoping to be in government, what is a Liberal government, if it is in power, going to do about this tax cut that the member for Kingston and The Islands is so concerned about?

We've said that individuals with incomes of over \$80,000 should reinvest in education and health care in this province, and if we are successful in the next election, we will help those people to reinvest in health care and in education. That is how we would fund the amount, because 6% of the taxpayers in the tax scheme of the Conservative government are receiving 25% of the tax break.

That's \$1.5 billion that could be reinvested in health care and education, and we're prepared to make it clear that's what we would do. What would the Liberal Party do?

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Member for Kingston and The Islands.

Mr Gerretsen: Thank you very much. There must be something in the air when the ultra-right-wing Reform government and the left-wing socialists join together to attack the reasonable alternative that's in the centre, that aspires to the values that the people of Ontario aspire to. Obviously both sides are getting somewhat worried about what has really happened.

1540

Mr Wildman: You told us what you're not going to do. Tell us what you're going to do.

Mr Gerretsen: I'll tell you, member for Algoma, we are certainly not going to raise taxes. That's number one. Because we know that you are in favour of raising taxes. We are not going to raise taxes, I can tell you that much.

Mr Wildman: What are you going to do?

Mr Gerretsen: You will just have to bide your time. Our platform will be unveiled in the fullness of time. But we will not raise taxes.

We will also make sure that everyone in this province will have access to health care, will have equal access to education and that the children of this province will not be forgotten. We have decided to make children our top priority in the next election because they are our future.

I think that if there's one sense the people of Ontario have always had, it's a sense of compassion, it's a sense of working together through our problems, but not by trying to balance your budget at the same time as you give people tax cuts, the way the government has been doing. As I've always said, this government has created more havoc and chaos in this province than any other government that has preceded it.

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: The two members from the Liberal caucus have outlined a very nice-looking brochure, and I would ask unanimous consent to have them read it word for word. I'd like to hear what's in it.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? No.

Further debate?

Applause.

Mr Christopherson: It really worries me when you guys are applauding me. It makes me wonder exactly what am I saying here. A flashback to a bygone era and I'm in some kind of serious trouble here?

I want to continue this debate a little bit because this is interesting. One of my friends in the Liberal Party asked rhetorically: "Why are you guys doing this? Are you guys afraid of us?" My response was, "Well, yeah." Look, we read the polls the same as anybody else. I think it would be extraordinarily stupid on the part of the government and the third party not to recognize the poll numbers as they are.

Having said that, I think that very much legitimizes the question, "How are you going to pay for all the things the

Liberal Party says they would do if they were granted the honour and opportunity to govern in the province of Ontario?" It's a fair question to ask. The government has set a path that has cut serious, important social programs such as health and education, and at the same time they've provided tax cuts where the very, very wealthy have benefited the most. This budget that we're dealing with today is no different. It's a continuation of that and, as the government pointed out, they accelerate some aspects of the tax expenditures. The Liberals, on the other hand, are saying they decry what you're doing as much as we in the NDP do and that they want to spend the money to put back in but won't tell us where it's going to come from.

As my House leader has said, we believe — and it's a very different direction than the government has gone in and certainly different from where the Libs are. We have said very clearly that we would, at the very least, generate \$1.5 billion per year to use to reinvest back in health care and back in education because we believe those priorities are so important that it calls on those in our society, the mere 6% of the population that earns more than \$80,000 and that gets 25% of the benefits of the tax cut — we think that's reasonable. We're prepared to put that to the people of Ontario in the next election. But I think it's fair to say that the Liberals are looking to have it both ways. They condemn the tax cut in the manner we have, they have said they're going to put money back into health and education the way we have, but they're not prepared to say where the money is going to come from. They want to stay on the supportive side of the tax cut agenda of the existing Tory government. We think that's wrong and we think it's misleading, and we think that in modern-day politics, people are looking for clarity, they're looking for honesty and they're looking for a party to say, "Here's what we'll do and here's how we'll pay for it."

The problem, of course, is that the government has set down a course that has done so much damage to our communities that the argument that money needs to be put back into education and health care we believe will be very appealing for a whole host of reasons, the biggest of which is, go into any of our communities and ask if they believe the education system is better since Mike Harris took over, if the health care system is better since Mike Harris took over, and I can tell you the answer is no.

I believe that people are also entitled to hear, whether or not they fully want to, where that money is going to come from. That is a fair position, and then if the people decide they want to stay with the course the government has put forward, they will be re-elected. If they want a change, then they're going to look for a party that's going to identify what it's going to do and how it's going to pay for it. I think we are on the road to providing that alternative and that the smoke-and-mirrors games of the official Liberal opposition is way out of its time, way out of its league and people will reject it out of hand.

Let me move to some of the specifics of the budget itself. I want to begin by talking about the impact on my community, my home town of Hamilton. Like most other communities right now, we're wrestling with local budgets

at the regional and at the city level. It's this government's agenda, your fiscal agenda, your insistence on taking that \$5 billion to \$6 billion a year out of our revenue stream to give your wealthy friends a huge tax cut, that has put all this pressure on our councils.

Your Minister of Municipal Affairs stood up when he announced it and said: "This is going to be revenue-neutral. Don't worry, this is just a change of responsibilities and services and nobody is going to lose. This is going to be a fair deal." The fact of the matter is that in Hamilton, at the regional level, we're looking at a \$26-million shortfall from the downloading of this government on to my municipal government's area of responsibility directly. I quote from the May 6 editorial in the *Hamilton Spectator*, which reads in part:

"A \$26-million downloading shortfall in Hamilton-Wentworth is helping to drive a 4.9% regional property tax increase this year. What difference will some of the tax reductions from Queen's Park make if they're taken away by higher municipal property taxes?"

What we have said from the beginning is that the average, middle-class working family doesn't benefit from your fiscal agenda. You can say, "We're cutting taxes here, and we've done this with the deficit, and we've done that with the budget," and try to tell people they're better off, but when they go in and pay user fees that were never there before or that have doubled or tripled in cost, when they are paying increases of over \$100 a year directly attributable to your downloading scheme, and when we see hospitals on the chopping block — and in Hamilton it's still not resolved. We still have St Peter's, Chedoke-McMaster or the Chedoke facility, the psychiatric hospital, on the block. We could still lose them all.

1550

In terms of schools, what's happening in Hamilton? Toni Skarica, the member for Wentworth North, legitimately, and I say this quite sincerely, is pushing the issue of new schools needed in his riding because there are so many portables. That's a legitimate issue and I obviously not only support his right, but philosophically that's what one is elected to do here in large part, to reflect those needs. But because of this government's funding formula and the way you set things up according to the way you want the world to operate, the only way Toni Skarica can say he needs more money in his part of our region, which is one of the newer, expanding areas of our region, is if inner-city schools in Hamilton, many of which I represent because they're in the downtown area, ought to be closed.

It's pretty sad when one of six MPPs in one area, one single community — we are one regional municipality — is bound so badly by this government's financial strait-jacket that he publicly says, "You've got to close those schools in inner Hamilton because it's the only way my education minister and finance minister will free up the money I need to have new schools built in my riding to replace all these portables." That's the kind of price the average working middle-class family is facing as a result of what you've done with taxes.

At the same time, of course, we know this government loves to take credit for all the economic activity that's happening. The American economy, in the minds of this Mike Harris-Ernie Eves Tory government, has nothing to do with this; it's all the actions of this government. The fact that there are historically low interest rates has nothing to do with that economy; it's what Mike Harris is doing here. The exchange rate, which is a major determinant of economic activity in our nation, happens to be, at least from a trading point of view, a huge advantage to us. That doesn't come into it. Oh no, everything that's happening is because Mike Harris is shutting down hospitals and schools and jacking up property taxes and giving a tax cut back to the wealthy. That somehow, in their mind, is creating all this economic stimulation. That's why in the ramp-up to the next election you believe that ordinary people, who have been devastated by your agenda, ought to come back to you.

No matter how much you try to push diversionary tactics like your stuff on crime, trying to make like you're the only one who cares about it and you're going to make that a big enough issue to divert attention away from what you've done to our communities — and if I might, we saw today in the House questions from my colleagues on the results of that kind of misplaced emphasis, which is what that is, when we see a senior 73 years old, an innocent senior, killed as a result of a police chase that may, it's alleged, have involved nothing more than shoplifting. That sort of policy, and that was the point of our question today, is something your crime commissioners like. They make that argument, that if you go after these areas and hit them hard enough, you'll take care of everything else.

Boy, it's interesting, while I'm mentioning crime, what's not in this budget. Remember the emphasis that was going to be there on new Canadians, and how that leaked out a few days before and blew up big time? It didn't find itself in here, the way you were originally planning to do it.

I don't think this government is going to be able to provide those kinds of diversionary tactics this time around. They worked the last time. Remember they ran the two ads the last time? The one talked about the so-called quota laws, where they played to the concerns people had about the future of their children's opportunity for jobs. You played that so viciously — successfully, but viciously none the less — and we lost some of the most progressive legislation this province ever had, temporarily.

The other thing you did was your workfare scam, where again you tried to find a group of people that could be blamed. We've seen this before in history, where you blame certain folks and say to the general public, "You know, if it weren't for them, if we could just fix them, we wouldn't have all these problems."

Mr Wildman: Scapegoating.

Mr Christopherson: "Scapegoating," my colleague the House leader says — absolutely true — and you're hoping to do it again. But I say to you, as I've said from the day I first had an opportunity to speak after the last election, this kind of agenda cannot lead to any kind of

prosperity for the vast majority of the citizens of our province, and at the end of the day, when you're knocking on doors, you will be held accountable for what happened in your community, not what happened when you travelled the cocktail circuit to your very well-to-do friends who pat you on the back and say: "Way to go. You're the only ones that had the courage to do the right thing." We know what you're hearing.

Most of you are somehow prepared to set aside what you're being told in your own community, but you're quite prepared to listen to such a very small chunk of the population, who of course love what you're doing. They love what you're doing because they're benefiting from it. Those folks don't need to worry about those inner-city schools closing in downtown Hamilton, because they've got enough money and they're lucky — it's not criminal, but they are lucky — to have enough money to send their kids to private school. What happens to those families in downtown Hamilton and the older parts of the city, where we face a lot of social challenges if you shut down what in many cases is the only source of recreation, social activity, extracurricular activity at those schools? If they're gone, they even lose the neighbourhood park, because the school was the best they had, the closest thing to — and let me tell you, these aren't Taj Mahal schools.

You've said that's fair. You sit there and you vote for these budget measures time after time, and you say, "Yes, this is the way the world ought to operate." Well, no, it's not the way the world in Ontario ought to operate. We won the distinction here in Canada — I believe three out of four times; it may be even better than that, but at least three out of four times — of being voted the best place in the world to live. That wasn't because we shut down hospitals, that wasn't because we shut down schools, and it certainly wasn't because we jacked up property taxes, cut services to the disabled and the poor and cut the income of the poorest of the poor by 20%. That's not why it happened. It happened because people looked and compared around the world and said, "You know, they've got a really decent health care system in that country and they've got a really decent education system in that country."

We all know that Ontario is the province that drives the economy of this nation. Certainly New Democrats are very proud that it was the NDP that brought in medicare, the first ever; in Saskatchewan, an NDP government, Tommy Douglas. We take a lot of pride in that, yes, we do.

But those are the things that built the kind of society — and yes, it was the economy that allowed us to do that, but it was an economy that recognized that giving all the benefit of a good economy to those that already have, let alone taking away from the rest, is not the way to do it. The rich are going to get richer. People are still going to have opportunities. But when you build a nation to be proud of, you take a look at the total income, the total revenue that's available and you say, "How can we make this a better place for everyone in a way that's fair and doesn't stifle individuals?" We did that for a long time.

Heck, it was former Progressive Conservative parties that managed that balance for so long in terms of being able to stay in power. You've done none of that. You've gone in the opposite direction.

1600

When we want to look at where we're heading under your policies, we look at standards of living for the majority of people that are well below what we would ever accept in this province. Before you took over, we would have looked at the way they ran those societies and said: "There's nothing there for us. There's nothing there for us to learn." There may be a couple of details of how they run this program or that. You can always learn that from a fellow democratic government, but in terms of where they put their priorities and the kind of society it builds, there was nothing there for us. We didn't want that.

That's why historically we took so much pride in leadership in Ontario, because there weren't always jurisdictions that had been where we wanted to go. We used our creativity and our skills and our education and, yes, our entrepreneurs, and we put those all together and said, "How do we take this next step in building a society we can be so proud of?" That's the history of how we got to where we were, and that's why the United Nations said what they said about us. It's the opposite of what you offer in these documents and in your throne speech and in your previous budgets and previous throne speech.

I believe sincerely that, regardless of the outcome of the next election, every single Tory backbencher will rue the day they said blindly, "I will support everything this government does and I don't care what happens to my community." You will regret that.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): It is indeed enlightening to have the member opposite make the comments he has because we have a concept of cabinet secrecy in parliamentary democracies, but I guess we now understand exactly why the Bob Rae government went down the road they did. Members like the one opposite as a cabinet minister obviously were pushing for more spending and more waste and more duplication. Don't find the savings first to make new investments. Don't find efficiencies to be able to incorporate new technology, to be able to find new and innovative ways of delivering service. Just spend, spend, spend to the point where we were overspending by \$11 billion a year.

You want to talk about shame, member, you should be ashamed that you were part of a government that drove the debt of this once great province all the way up to \$100 billion. We're the ones who have turned that around, we and the hundreds and thousands of working Ontarians who now have a new sense of optimism, a new enthusiasm, a new spirit of excitement. The investments they're making, both in their time and their money, buying cars, buying homes — 341,000 new jobs a result of that; 70,000 housing starts in the month of March. Imagine, 70,000 new homes in one month. That's more than exist in all of Pickering and Ajax put together, for example, and that was just

one month's new construction. That's what's really happening.

I understand the member opposite's frustration, that he wouldn't like to see the kind of contrast that's shown in the document that was mailed out to all Ontario citizens, the same citizens who tune in and watch the parliamentary channel because they don't want to hear the news, don't want to hear democracy filtered through the media, want to get the straight goods.

You don't want them to see the right news. You don't want them to see the good news of what's happening all across Ontario to support what they themselves and their families are seeing. Ontario is back again. We're pulling the rest of Canada. We're leading the world. That's a testament to what's happening in Ontario today. That's why I'll vote for the budget.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I want to know from the member for Hamilton Centre whether he believes that the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board was established for something other than purveying propaganda for the Conservative Party. As he may know, the chief executive officer of the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board is Mr David Lindsay, who was the principal secretary to Mike Harris, who has long been associated with the Progressive Conservative caucus and had to make the transition to a public service job and has not been able to.

We have had, at the taxpayers' expense — if this were at the Conservative Party's expense, I would have no objection — from this Ontario Jobs and Investment Board a pamphlet mailed out to every household at a cost of at least three quarters of a million dollars. You may think people will appreciate this when they get it and somehow be influenced by it. I think they'll be offended by the fact that it is not the Conservative Party but the taxpayers of Ontario who have had to pay for this.

This is the misuse of an agency that I think had some promise. I thought when this agency was established there was a good reason for it and it could produce results. Instead, it's quite obvious that its only use is to try to get the government re-elected using taxpayers' dollars.

Second, I would ask the member if he is aware of the fact that 35 hospitals in this province have been closed or merged despite the fact that the Premier said on television in May 1995 during an election campaign, "Certainly, Robert," he said to Robert Fisher, "I can guarantee you it is not my plan to close hospitals." Is the member aware of that? Does he believe Mike Harris has lived up to that particular promise?

Mr Wildman: I want to congratulate my friend from Hamilton Centre for his presentation. I want to highlight a couple of things. He pointed out the contradiction in the Liberal position, but he concentrated most of his discussion on the Conservative budget which is essentially designed over a period of time to finance a transfer of wealth from the poorest to the wealthiest. That's basically what the government's whole agenda is about.

We all know that despite the fact that the member for Scarborough East said, "You make the savings first and then you do these things," the government is borrowing

about \$5 billion a year each year of its mandate to finance that transfer of wealth to the wealthy. The government is borrowing this money to finance a tax break to very wealthy people.

What is it producing? It is producing a social deficit, the kind of deficit that my friend from Hamilton Centre discussed when he talked about what's happening in the education system in his community. He understands that suburban areas that are growing in population need to expand their educational facilities, so he understands the member for Wentworth North demanding more schools for his area, but he opposes, as we all do, the funding formula that has been produced for education, for school boards in this province, which basically means that you have to make cuts to inner-city schools, ignoring the fact that there are children in those classrooms. This government says they're going to put money into classrooms; in fact they're closing classrooms.

Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: The member for Hamilton Centre voiced a concern that the government was agreeing with him. I don't think he has to dwell on that concern very much longer.

The Deputy Speaker: That's not a point of order. Further questions and comments?

Mr Baird: I want to congratulate the member for Hamilton Centre. He got off to a great start with his speech. Unfortunately, about five minutes in it crashed and burned. I only hoped he could have continued with the remarks he started at the outset of his remarks.

I disagree with the member for Hamilton Centre on just about everything, and on most issues I passionately disagree with him, but on this issue of taxes and the deficit, I can respect his position, that at least he has the guts and the political courage to be honest and straightforward with the people of Ontario. They don't like the tax cut. They disagree with the tax cut. They think this government's economic agenda is going in the wrong direction and his party proposes to take it in another direction.

I agreed with him when he pointed to our colleagues in the official opposition who want to be able to say that Ontario can have everything, that the tax cut is somehow terribly wrong when you look at all the numbers of jobs it's created, but they're going to keep it. It's so bad they're going to keep it. That's going to be the foundation of their economic policy. Mr McGuinty's policies are like a chocolate fudge brownie diet: Eat all the chocolate fudge brownies you want and you'll somehow lose weight. I simply can't understand that type of economic philosophy.

He also talked about the member for Wentworth North, with respect to schools in suburban Ontario. The member for Wentworth North visited my constituency, Nepean, in his capacity as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education and he saw at first hand the problem in Barrhaven in my constituency, where the schools are bursting at the seams, and you have schools in other parts of the region that are three quarters empty. There's one school in the suburbs of Ottawa with 30 portables.

I'll tell you, like the member for Wentworth North, I make no apologies for fighting for the interests of suburban children who have been put out in portables for far too long while schools in other parts of the region are 60% or 70% empty. That is an important intervention on behalf of suburban children in the province.

1610

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Hamilton Centre has two minutes to reply.

Mr Christopherson: Thank you to all those who cared enough or were moved enough to rise in their place and comment.

The member for St Catharines raised an important part of the government's propaganda and the fact that the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board that put out this document is headed up by David Lindsay, who of course just came fresh from the Premier's office. You talk about unfiltered access to what's going on without the media and others. I think anybody watching this today who hears those statements of fact will draw their own conclusions and know what it means and who's trying to influence whom.

I appreciate very much my colleague from Algoma's expanding on the issue of me recognizing — and I did try to lay that out as best I could, to be fair — the right that Toni Skarica, the member for Wentworth North, has in raising those concerns about portables. My concern was that he was taking a position based on the government's funding formula that necessitated shutting down schools in my community in order to take the money from poorer kids, in some cases, but even if you didn't have that, to take money from one set of kids and give it to another set of kids so they can have a decent school. That's no way to build a proper education system.

To my friend from Nepean, let me just say that when he talked about the member for Wentworth North visiting him as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, he got fired from that job because there's a guy who stood up on some local issues and said: "No, I'm not going to march in lockstep down the road for Mike Harris. I don't think that's right for my community." He paid the ultimate price for that. Let me tell you, on a tour of some of the schools in inner Hamilton, he has revised his position and is acknowledging that we can't afford to lose those facilities.

To the member for Scarborough East, you continue to be out of your mind.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York): It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today and speak on the budget. As we move to create the best jurisdiction in which to live, work and raise a family, it becomes clear that acting decisively and with courage in a number of areas is necessary.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: I ask you to come to order, please. I can't hear the speaker.

Mrs Munro: There is a link between economic growth and job creation, between employment and the strength of our social safety net.

Mr Gerretsen: How come you haven't found it yet?

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Kingston and The Islands.

Mrs Munro: In recognition of the need to invest in jobs for the future, there have been several strategic investments made. The principles underlying these strategic investments are clear: equity and accessibility and the preservation of community lifestyles.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister, could you come to order, please.

Mrs Munro: I'm going to concentrate on two of these particular initiatives. The first one is the telecommunications access partnership, sometimes referred to as TAP. This program is investing \$30 million over the next three years to further encourage innovative ways to make use of the information highway.

In my riding of Durham York, the Durham Community Network, a broad-based consortium of public and private sector partners, recognized the need for equal, universal and cost-effective access to the information highway. Through TAP and Network 2000, they are developing an integrated community network in Durham region which will improve communications access, particularly for residents, businesses and public sector organizations in the northern rural areas of the region.

Because the Ontario government recognizes the importance of technology and the need for accessible information at your fingertips, especially in small communities, we are pleased to be a partner in this program which to date has committed over \$4.5 million.

The Network 2000 program is a provincial strategy to create widespread public access to Ontario's library resources, the Internet, multimedia resources and government information services, by the year 2000.

This program partnership has an implementation and working committee structure that includes public libraries, Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, Ministry of Energy, Science and Technology, Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, Ontario Library Service and private sector representation.

At the end of March I was in Uxbridge participating in the Ontario government's announcement of a \$1.5-million telecommunications access partnership program grant being awarded to the Durham Community Network. This network is expected to provide high-speed data communications, voice, videoconferencing and Internet access. Again, these programs are expected to be launched in stages.

Undertaking a program of this magnitude requires long hours and a great deal of dedication by individuals and groups. It is evident that the committee and partners working in Durham region for over a year on this project have excelled in that cooperative role.

Barbara Oram, who is the partnership coordinator for the Durham Board of Education, and Ron Compton of

Compton Communications are just two individuals I spoke to who should be commended for their hard work in making this program a reality.

As Ron Compton of Compton Communications stated:

"In today's global economy, the countries that will be the most successful are the countries that build high-speed communications networks.

"Why is it so important to have a digital pipeline spanning the country and landing at the doorsteps in Scugog, Brock and Uxbridge? It is the immediate availability of information, it is knowledge, it is opportunity, it is wealth and it is power.

"I am impressed by the Ontario government's recognition of the importance of the communications network. They demonstrate this through the TAP grant program. The TAP program shows that our government understands what is happening in world markets. It all ends up at the community level."

Brock Township Public Library and Uxbridge Public Library are part of the Durham Community Network. They have been presented with funds to help them implement Network 2000, a separate project within the TAP program which allows them to share resources with three libraries in Uxbridge, Scugog and Brock as well as involved libraries in south Pickering and Whitby.

This project will make a difference, and I commend all of the partners for their leadership and innovation. This network is a tremendous opportunity for our children, our businesses, our hospitals, agriculture and all people in our community. Whether in Uxbridge, Beaverton or Toronto, residents need access to advanced information highway applications and services to promote economic development, enhance access to education and enrich the resources of our local libraries.

The information highway is transforming the ways in which people live and work in Ontario and around the world. By extending the existing southern infrastructure to the northern part of Durham region, we are helping to create new opportunities for private enterprise, governments and community organizations to provide value added services.

This telecommunications link for the region will boost north Durham's capacity to overcome barriers of distance and become fully integrated into the provincial and emerging global economy. The expanded access provided by the Durham Community Network is the beginning of many opportunities and doors which will open for north Durham residents.

I would like to close by simply identifying the important role that these programs illustrate: the fact that we must move in order to be able to maintain the principles of access, of equity, and certainly of the opportunity that every Ontarian deserves.

As the budget confirms, Ontario is poised to enter the 21st century with confidence, and this program is just one example of our commitment to the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

1620

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): I just want to make a few comments on the member for Durham-York. She praised the Harris government, but I have to say all the wrongs that the Harris government has got and the way it's affected the residents of our area and of Ontario; for example, the bungling of the dialysis that was promised some two years ago to the residents of my community. If anyone knew what these residents went through in the ice storm, travelling to Ottawa or Kingston three times a week so that they would be able to continue to live — I'm having lots of trouble with the minister now, the former minister, trying to get answers on whether a licence has been issued or not. It's a very serious situation and I'm very disappointed that it's taken so long to get an answer.

Also, the municipalities in our part of Ontario and across Ontario don't know where they stand — it's budget time — on the downloading that the province has done on them.

One thing that we must not forget is that in the 1998 budget they take all the credit for everything that's happened in Ontario. They forget the economic growth in the United States and other external global forces that should have some of the credit too.

In our part of Ontario, if they would put a little bit of effort into leasing out the provincial parks, it sure could help a lot in our community. That would be found money. There have been proposals, but anyway they don't seem to be very interested in opening them.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): It's not often, by virtue of numbers, that we have the opportunity and the distinct pleasure to listen to the member for Durham-York, one M^{me} Julia Munro, former classroom contributor and teacher. I take my hat off, because the member opposite speaks with sincerity.

Somehow that's part of the problématique that we have to come to terms with. If only it was tactical and strategic. If only the schemes and the philosophy spelled out in the budget were for mere political purpose. But what is more disturbing than the shell game that is being presented to Ontarians is that people like Julia Munro, former classroom teacher and contributor, really believe in it. That's the drama. That's a tragedy in itself. It's not even comic relief. They really believe in the dogmatic position.

Ironically, they claim that we have a recovery of unprecedented proportions. Walk around Queen's Park. Ironically, you have never been faced with such poverty, with so many poor — children, people in bus shelters, homeless people — and yet this is the recovery? At what price the tax break?

The Deputy Speaker: Before we proceed, I don't like to interrupt people during their two-minute comments, but I'd like to remind all members that they should refer to other members by their riding and not by name. I'd appreciate it if people would remember that.

Further questions and comments?

Mr Baird: I'd like to congratulate my colleague the member for Durham-York on her remarks. The member for Durham-York is a very passionate defender of educa-

tion policies in this government and a very stalwart representative for the constituents of Durham-York.

She mentioned in her remarks some of the contents of the budget. I too share her enthusiasm for the telecommunications access partnerships, the TAP program that she made remarks about, in addition to support for libraries in terms of telecommunication. Like for her, that's a big issue in my riding. Telecommunications research and development is the biggest single employer in that industry in my community and they too welcomed the announcement in those access partnerships.

They also welcomed the announcement with respect to high-skills training to ensure that we can train the workforce here in Ontario to be able to take those jobs, because there are literally thousands of jobs going unfilled in Ontario in those areas. We saw in the pre-budget hearings the Canadian Advanced Technology Association come forward before the standing committee on finance and economic affairs requesting greater resources and greater priority for that area, and this government responded in a significant way, even perhaps more significant than the technology community expected, in the budget.

I know the member for Durham-York would share my enthusiasm for those initiatives, because of course telecommunications and research and development isn't a big job growth area just in eastern Ontario and Ottawa-Carleton, but in the greater Toronto area and York region and in the Golden Triangle between Cambridge, Kitchener-Waterloo and that part of the province. So I share her enthusiasm for those initiatives as well.

Mr Gerretsen: I too enjoyed the comments of the member for Durham-York, and it's certainly interesting to see what's happening in her riding.

I know we talk a lot about economic recovery in this House, and the government tries to take a lot of credit for that and for the number of jobs that have been created. Of course, you wonder. We all know it isn't just this government that caused that. Was it the federal policies of Paul Martin? What about the economy in the United States? What about low interest rates? There are so many factors that go into it. It always amazes me how a government, any government, tries to stand up on these issues and take credit for it all. We all know that isn't so.

Let me just tell you one other thing very quickly, and that is simply this: There may be an economic recovery in most of Ontario, maybe right here in Metro Toronto or the Golden Horseshoe area; I can tell you that there is not an economic recovery going on in eastern Ontario.

Mr Baird: Come to my riding.

Mr Gerretsen: Maybe in your riding, sir, and in that case I wish those people well —

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Member for Nepean, you've had your turn.

Mr Gerretsen: The fact is that I know in my community and in many communities around my riding the people don't know anything about an economic recovery. They certainly have not seen an increase in construction. The minister there doesn't believe it. I can tell you that in my community there has been a withdrawal of about \$100

million in money that used to come in from the federal government, the provincial government and through local governments. As a result of downsizing and everything else that's related thereto, there have been jobs lost that simply have not been replaced, and as a result of the job loss, there simply has not been as much spent in consumer dollars — you can go on and on. The recovery has certainly not been consistent throughout Ontario, and I think note ought to be taken of that.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Durham-York, you have two minutes.

Mrs Munro: I certainly welcome the comments that have been made by the members for Cornwall, Lake Nipigon, Nepean and Kingston and The Islands. I would just like to comment, first of all, when the member for Cornwall refers to some of the problems that still remain within the community, that within his own community the local newspaper identified this budget as one that provided both tax cuts and the fact that kids were at the top of the budget.

The member from Nipigon referred to my background as a secondary school teacher. I thought it was rather interesting, the comment made by the president of the Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation, who said regarding the budget: "They have listened that our classes need textbooks. We need technology to move it forward. They've listened that some boards are in very difficult, dire straits in this new amalgamated system and they're helping them out." So I think we do have some clear indication of the kinds of things that our program has responded to.

It's interesting, when it's suggested that perhaps the job opportunities and the economic growth are restricted in parts of the province, that we have something from Owen Sound where it is suggested that the budget is good news for all. In fact, when we do a quick scan around the province, there are those who recognize the kinds of implications that this budget has for all of us.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

1630

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I'm pleased to join in the debate around this very important issue, the government's most recent budget. Indeed, because the budget is so seminal to a government's program, it merits the kind of attention that it gets. I'm happy to follow along the lines that my leader, Dalton McGuinty, the leader of our party, spoke about several days ago.

Today I want to spend a few minutes addressing first of all the overall state of our economy and the overall state of western economies in general. Like my leader, Dalton McGuinty, I want to talk too about the kinds of choices governments have — choices between tax cuts and cuts to hospitals, choices between tax cuts and cuts to classroom education, choices between the types of taxes we pay. Governments have decisions to make along those lines: What is the appropriate mix of taxes? My leader, Dalton McGuinty, spoke about those issues, and I'd like to take it a little bit further.

We all know today that western economies by and large are benefiting from unprecedented growth in productivity and investment. Government revenues, whether it be in the United States, whether it be our federal government or whether it be the governments of other provinces, are growing in a remarkable fashion, and Ontario has been no different.

Ontario has benefited from low interest rates at the international level. Ontario has benefited from labour productivity increases. I'd like to see the government for one moment quit patting itself on the back and take a moment to applaud our workers, whose productivity rates have improved dramatically in the last 10 years. Let's congratulate those Canadians who are saving at record rates and investing at record rates for helping to drive and fuel an enviable improvement in our overall economy.

The government has made a series of choices. We on this side of the House acknowledge that there are difficult choices. We on this side of the House acknowledge that no matter who had been in government, these types of choices would have had to be made. But we differ in a number of respects with the approach this government has taken and, yes, it will be incumbent upon us to say how we will do things differently and what we would do differently.

Frankly, I no more want to talk about things that went on 10 years ago than I'm sure this government wants to talk about its members' support for Brian Mulroney a mere five years ago. We ought to be talking about today. In fact, Dalton McGuinty has said, and I agree, that the next election is going to be about who you trust. There is a fiscal dividend that will be significant, that will require tough but enviable choices, choices I don't think many of us would have envisioned even five years ago, prior to the change in tone and tenor that was set by Paul Martin and the federal Liberals in Ottawa beginning in 1993.

Yes, whoever forms the next government, whoever campaigns in the next election, will have to talk about trust and will have to define what they want to do with the so-called fiscal dividend. There will be choices — choices between taxation, fiscal policy and debt reduction — and it will be the mix of those three policies and the trust which any one of our parties in this Legislature brings to the table that ultimately will decide the fate.

I would be remiss if I didn't begin by saying I think all of us in this House would agree that the unemployment rate remains stubbornly high in this province and in Canada in general. There are other jurisdictions where they've achieved better results. I suspect that all three parties in the next general election will be offering ideas and possible solutions to a problem I think we all acknowledge to be very serious.

My leader, Dalton McGuinty, has said that unemployment continues to trouble all of us, that it ought to be at the top of our list. It certainly ought to come in ahead of tax cuts. Yes, lots of jobs have been created here in Ontario and in Canada and in the United States, but here our unemployment rate remains extremely high relative to some other jurisdictions. How do we deal with that and how do we address it without the usual rhetoric and pat-

ting on the back that we see from the government? Not one word about the unemployment rate, and I believe most of the government members are concerned about that. I don't believe their solutions are necessarily the right ones. I don't believe we should have had the kind of massive tax cut that we've seen until such time as the budget was balanced.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): You don't like the jobs that have been created?

The Acting Speaker: The member for Ottawa-Rideau.

Mr Duncan: Yes, I do like the jobs that have been created, to respond to the member; there's no question. I guess I ask myself, in looking forward, could there have been more created and are we doing as well as other jurisdictions? If we look at this government and its track record, I would suspect they're not looking at that.

This is a government, frankly, that could have done more. Imagine, had you held off your tax cut until today. Your budget would be balanced; Ontario's credit rating would have been lifted; the amount of interest we're paying would be lower; and the debt wouldn't have grown as rapidly as it has under your government.

This government wants to talk about its record of achievement, and like my leader, Dalton McGuinty, I want to talk about areas where you said you'd do something and you haven't done it. I want to talk about trust. We don't believe you can be trusted with the fiscal dividend, nor should you be.

This is a government that said it wouldn't close a single hospital. That's what your leader said. To date it's 35. In my own community in Windsor, we are still plagued by long waiting lines in both of our emergency rooms, at Hotel-Dieu Grace and Windsor Regional. This is a government that said it would not cut funding from hospitals.

This is a government that said it wouldn't cut funding from our classrooms, yet in Windsor, Tecumseh, St Clair Beach, what's happening? Teachers are being laid off. Principals and vice-principals are being laid off. Social workers are being laid off. Custodial workers are being laid off. When you try to blame school boards, you won't get away with it, because people understand.

This is a government that chose a tax cut over maintaining air quality monitoring stations in Windsor, a city that historically has a high rate of air quality related disease and problems. You closed not one of them, not two; you closed all of them. You don't do it any more.

1640

This is a government that has cut millions from child care. You cut nutritional allowances for pregnant welfare mothers. This is a government that cuts services to developmentally disabled children, and just to put it in a very personal context, 21 families in my riding have adult autistic children who have had all of their relief and support cut. We have met with them. We have heard their concerns. They have written to the minister; the minister has not responded. They have asked for a meeting with the minister; the minister won't respond. These are cuts that rest directly there. It's about priorities the government sets, it's about the hand the government has dealt, so when

a government in Ontario makes choices between a tax cut and services for autistic children, they very clearly define what they're about.

Let's talk for a few minutes about this hit-and-run type of approach. We're seeing a kinder, gentler government now, at least that's going to be the impression they try to create. There is no doubt that this budget, in my view, really is hit and run, as my leader, Dalton McGuinty, said. He has talked about moving and shuffling moneys around, and they're trying to forget what has happened over the last three years.

Let's take a moment and talk about our health care system. According to the government's own documents, \$870 million from hospital budgets. What does that mean? That means that when our friends and relatives require care, whether it be in an emergency room or in a ward room or semiprivate room, chances are there won't be enough nursing staff available to provide the kind of care people ought to be receiving, and yet the government saw fit, despite those long waits, to cut taxes. Ten thousand nurses and front-line care providers have been let go: fired, got rid of, told, "You're not important to the system." You can run, but you won't be able to hide.

These things happen, and I think the government members opposite, at least those who are listening carefully to their constituents, will acknowledge that there are serious problems in those hospitals and that in fact this government has done nothing to help; not only that, this government has, in our view, contributed to the problem. I would argue that the government has been negligent in not responding more quickly to the acute nature of problems that are confronted by patients in hospitals on a daily basis.

The Tories delisted \$170 million in OHIP services. I think that's second only to the NDP. You may have exceeded them now, based on your most recent analysis. Like the previous NDP government, you have chosen to delist more and more services. In January 1998, 17,901 patients were on waiting lists for long-term-care beds in Ontario, up from 15,683 in February 1997. These are the government's numbers, and they give us some loose promise about spending \$1.2 billion over the next eight or 10 years.

The incidence of emergency room overcrowding has skyrocketed, evidenced by the frequency with which hospitals are turning away ambulances. Let's look at some of the numbers. In Metro and surrounding areas, hospitals were on redirect status an average of 162 hours. What that means to the people listening out there is that when you go to an emergency room, the chances of getting in there are way down as a result of this government's policies and you might be redirected. As those in the health care business have told us, the time for that redirection could be life and death.

The government then again talks about its most recent announcements. Let's look at some of their past announcements and what's happened. The 1996, 1997 and 1998 budgets identified a total of \$1.8 billion in restructuring dollars, of which only \$154 million has actually been spent. You made this big dollar announcement and

then you didn't put the money into the program. In our community, that has meant longer waiting lists at both our remaining hospitals. That has meant that the MRI machine we desperately needed, instead of being operational in 1996, is only now coming on stream.

I say to those other communities that are only beginning this process, don't trust this government. They have said it repeatedly, repeatedly: They'd rather give tax cuts than reinvest in health care. In the 1996-97 budget, there was \$170 million more identified for long-term care. At the end of that budget year, they'd actually spent \$5 million less than the year before.

This budget carries on that noble shell game that they've been playing. That's why those members opposite know that in community after community the reason they're vulnerable on health care is because they've done nothing. They have been negligent in dealing with the problems.

Education: The NDP cut half a billion from education. This government's followed up on that by cutting another \$533 million out of the education budget. These are numbers that come from the government's own documents. We forced them into saying they'd have to cut another \$670 million. This comes down to an issue of trust.

They said they wouldn't touch classrooms; they've hit classrooms. "Hit and run," as my leader Dalton McGuinty has said. They cut \$145 million from junior kindergarten, they cut \$150 million from adult education, shortsighted policies that, on the one end of the spectrum with our youngest people, will make it more difficult to achieve a good education; on the other end, make it more difficult for people to get off of welfare and get into meaningful, paying jobs.

The funding formula: They claimed \$470 million cut from non-classroom spending, as if principals, vice-principals, teacher prep time and adult education aren't part of a classroom; \$95 million cut from an early learning funding formula; \$300 million in provincial funding cuts for capital spending each year. Next week, I'm attending the retirement dinner of John Staley, the principal at St Anne high school in Tecumseh, a high school that still has close to 50 portable classrooms.

At a time when virtually every other major jurisdiction is investing in education, you're cutting, whether it be at the elementary, secondary or post-secondary level — 60% increases in tuition that make university more expensive and less accessible. As Dalton McGuinty says, "This election will be about trust and about vision in the future." And yes, absolutely, all of us have to spell out how we'll do it differently.

When it comes down to trust, I've heard members of the third party direct barbs at our party about what we will or won't do. Remember, whenever they tell you anything, that prior to the last election this was the party of organized labour that systematically stripped collective agreements. This was the party of public auto insurance. I'm sure the member for Welland can tell you how much they were committed to public auto insurance. What did they do? They didn't proceed.

This is a party that said it would cut tuition at the post-secondary level. What did they do? They raised it by 50% and made it less accessible. Now their former members are helping this government implement — I remember Dave Cooke. He was a fine member of provincial Parliament from my part of the province. He made a great contribution to our city and arguably was one of your more competent members and ministers. He's over there now, recently joined by Floyd Laughren.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, the member for Ottawa-Rideau.

1650

Mr Duncan: This is a party that closed dozens of hospital beds in my community and is trying to absolve itself of that memory. It's trying to pretend that it didn't cut \$500 million from health care; it's trying to pretend that all that didn't happen. When was the last time you heard them talk about those five years? And they were all there. They all voted for those budgets; they all voted for the record deficit and the record debt.

I say, yes, it's incumbent upon all of us to deal with the issues that will confront us, enviable issues, I think we all agree, in the future. Dalton McGuinty, the leader of our party, will be presenting an alternative that will be much more palatable to simple tax cuts. It will be an alternative that deals with quality of health care, an issue that you have ignored. It will be an alternative that invests in our children, as we've already clearly outlined and documented in our First Steps document.

Mr Guzzo: That's not what he said at the leadership —

The Acting Speaker: The member for Ottawa-Rideau, it's the last time.

Mr Duncan: It will deal with education in a way that this government simply won't understand. It will look to the future and not the past. It won't ignore what you've ignored, the needs of our health care system and our education system. It certainly will deliver Dalton McGuinty's vision, which is much better than any vision you could ever hope to provide.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Pouliot: I always enjoy the comments from the member for Windsor-Walkerville: such passion and such energy. Unfortunately, the downfall is such missed opportunity. The need to be a name-dropper: "Dalton McGuinty" this, and "Dalton McGuinty, please, you know I love you." I love you too: the unknown, uncharted waters. One columnist once referred to him as "Dilbert Who?" McGuinty. But now it's the cult of the leader, because we must promote our leader.

He started the salvo by saying, "I will talk about international markets. I will talk about world economic conditions," so I rushed out. I said, "I'd better brush up, because I've been mandated to respond in a mere two minutes." So I got the Globe and Mail. I had about 20 minutes to get somewhat familiar to talk about international currency, about the Eurodollar which is pending, about the Asian crisis, about the banking system in Japan,

and to open the television and follow about the European markets, to be followed by both the North American and South American markets.

I wasted my time, because he did not address one of those crucial, catalytic issues, the make-or-break issues. What he did is he played politics. Yet the document that was unveiled by one Ernie Eves: no name mentioned. The cohort, one Mike Harris: not the name mentioned. Dalton McGuinty: Now you see him, now you don't. How are you, Dalton? «Comme ci, comme ça.»

It was a good speech, a good address, but a missed opportunity. I thank you.

The Acting Speaker: I would just like to remind the members that when you refer to another member, you refer to his riding. It's as simple as that. If you don't do it, I'll interrupt you.

Further questions and comments? The member for Nepean.

Mr Baird: Thank you, member for Carleton East, Mr Speaker, Monsieur le Président, Carleton-Est.

The member for Windsor-Walkerville, as usual, gave a very interesting set of remarks. It's far from the fire that we used to see from him in his previous incarnation as critic for labour, where, like the member for Hamilton Centre, he would take a pin out of his head and blow up on cue and the Richter scale would go off the chart.

He did make some interesting remarks. I was particularly sad, though, to see him go after the former member for Nickel Belt, Mr Laughren, in terms of his position. He's an honourable fellow.

I do find the Liberal Party's policy on economics, as enunciated by my colleague from Windsor-Walkerville, rather interesting, because I remember that in my part of the province, and I suspect in Algoma and in Lac-Nipigon, Liberal candidates around the province went around promising to cut taxes by \$2 billion a year.

Mr Wildman: And lay off people.

Mr Baird: The member for Algoma says, "And lay off people." In fact, the Liberal candidate in Ottawa-Carleton —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Ottawa West, you're not in your seat.

Mr Baird: The Liberal candidate in Ottawa West in the last provincial election promised to lay off 13,000 or 14,000 public servants; in fact more than the Ontario government. I suspect there were people who voted for this party because they didn't want to see the public service reductions that the Liberal Party promised.

It's a bit strange as well: He talked about labour policies of the previous government. I too remember the Liberal Party in the last provincial election promising to repeal Bill 40, promising to scrap Bill 40, against the labour movement.

Mr Wildman: Really?

Mr Baird: The member for Algoma says, "Really?" Then they came into government and changed their mind. They were going to scrap the Workplace Health and Safety Agency, and then after the election they changed

their mind. They promised a whole host of things and they changed their mind. They changed their mind so often, it's hard to know which is their policy, which is their real policy, which will be the next policy. I guess it's the wait-and-see policy.

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): It's always great to follow on the heels of the member for Windsor-Walkerville. As he has indicated, there will be a lot of people taking a very close look at our leader, Dalton McGuinty, over the next couple of years, at least over the next 18 months or so.

The nice thing about going home and listening to people who watch us on a regular basis, and I know we have a great number of people out there, is that they often refer to the fact that our leader, Dalton McGuinty, tells the folks out there how he will be different, how he will be different than Mike Harris. We see that often, and it's quite rewarding to know that he will bring vision into the future; as well, he will bring trust to the table.

The member for Windsor-Walkerville also spoke of unemployment. As a member from northern Ontario, a good number of folks out there and a lot of members often forget the fact that unemployment is going up in northern Ontario. When this government pats itself on the back, I have a very difficult time when I know that people back home are certainly facing unemployment figures much higher than what our southern members, people from the Golden Horseshoe area, would want to see in terms of an unemployment figure in their region. Again, I bring that back to the table, as the member has indicated a number of times.

When we take a look at the government patting itself on the back, they often talk about their tax cuts, but what they forget to talk about is how that's affecting our health care system. I indicated to the minister only a few days ago about psychiatric patients being locked up in jail. The response was, "Really?" That's what's happening in northwestern Ontario. That's because the money is not going to the health care services of northern Ontario. Again, a great number of facts were brought to the table by the member.

Mr Wildman: I want to say with the greatest of respect, very sincerely, that we are all partisan in this House; we should be. That's what we are elected here for, partly: to put forward the positions of our parties, to put forward differences of view on the issues of the day and various policies and approaches to resolving those issues, and then to allow the electorate the opportunity to make choices. That's what our democratic system is about.

In that regard, I accept the presentation of the member for Windsor-Walkerville. His partisanship in that context is understood, and I accept that. But I do take serious exception to the last few comments in his speech, where he attempted, I think — I hope I misunderstood him — to besmirch the record and the reputation of two former members of this House, members of this caucus.

For instance, he tried to give the impression that the former member for Nickel Belt was somehow helping this government implement its agenda, when in fact he knows

full well that that member, who served in this House for 25 years with great distinction on behalf of his own constituents and the people of Ontario, both in opposition and as the Treasurer of Ontario, is now the chair of an arm's-length regulatory body, appointed by this government to a regulatory body that has nothing to do with implementing the program of a particular government but is charged with making decisions with regard to the regulations on energy policy and energy companies in this province, and I demand that the member apologize to the former member for Nickel Belt.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Your time has expired.

The member for Windsor-Walkerville, you have two minutes.

1700

Mr Duncan: I want, first of all, to address my colleague from Ottawa who referenced something I said about labour policy in my statement. I didn't address labour policy; I addressed health care and education. Those are the issues that people are going to want to talk about in this election.

Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal Party are addressing those issues in a way that you couldn't. We've said we will put the improvement of our health care system ahead of tax cuts. We will put it ahead of the other changes you have wrought in your government. We will put health care first, we will put our children's education first and we won't try to wrap it up with empty rhetoric and broken promises about not cutting classroom spending. In fact you've cut classroom spending, you've caused an emergency in emergency rooms and you've failed to address long-term-care issues in a meaningful and substantial way.

The members of the third party have raised a number of issues. If it was taken that I was being insulting to the former member for Nickel Belt, that wasn't my intention at all. My intention was to point out that every one of you was there for the five years from 1990 to 1995 and you can't run from that record.

You said prior to the last election that you would never strip a collective agreement and you stripped collective agreements. You said you wouldn't cut health care and you cut health care. You said you would never raise tuition. In fact, I remember quite clearly you said the province should bear a greater percentage of those costs. And what did you do? You raised tuition by more than 50%, by almost as much as these guys. Your record won't be forgotten by anyone.

I was very careful to point out the outstanding contributions of MM. Cooke and Laughren to this House and this province. The problem is that party won't even acknowledge its own past. When was the last time you heard Bob Rae's name?

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Your time has expired.

Further debate? The member for Algoma.

Mr Wildman: I want to take the opportunity in my intervention on the budget debate to deal with some serious concerns that I think all of us in northern Ontario, what-

ever our political party, share. I hope members will receive my comments in that vein and recognize that I'm raising some very serious concerns for my region and the people of my region because I don't believe, honestly, that many members in this House, of whatever political party, understand the seriousness of the economic situation we're facing right now in northern Ontario.

I also will take the opportunity, as representative for the —

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Don't worry about the clock. It has been taken care of. We have a watch to keep the time. Just keep on. Don't worry.

Mr Wildman: Thank you, except my problem then is that I won't know how much time I have left. I hope to also make some remarks with regard to education policy and the effects of the budget on education. I hope I will have time to do that.

In northern Ontario right now, as you know, we are in the hinterland of the province. We always have been. We are a resource-based economy, an economy that is largely dependent upon forestry and mining, with a significant amount of tourism as well. All of those are resource-based economies, all of them resource-based industries. We also have some other industries that are not as important for the overall economic health of the north. We have some manufacturing, we have some service industries of course and we also have some agriculture, but the main part of our economy is resource-based, whether it's forestry, mining or tourism.

We have always contributed a great deal towards the overall wealth of the province because of those primary industries. Historically, far more wealth has been generated by those primary industries than has returned to the north in terms of private or public investment.

We have also had a small population, scattered over a very large territory, that has historically been about 10% of the total population of the province, covering about 80% of the land mass. Most people in southern Ontario, even if they hear this from time to time, don't understand, partly because they're used to looking at the roadmaps, which somebody historically decided should be divided in half, with southern Ontario put on one side and northern Ontario put on the back, at different scales. People look at them and they don't understand that southern Ontario is a very small area compared to the north. It's about 20% of the total land mass of the province, as opposed to 80% in northern Ontario.

We have serious difficulties with transportation, with communications, and of course we have a climate which is not as conducive to habitation in many areas, or to agriculture or other types of activity. This has always been the case, so the challenges of economic development in northern Ontario have always been greater, despite the fact that the primary industries of the north contribute a great deal to the overall wealth of the province.

What's the situation now? I don't know if members of the House are aware that in the last two years we have seen significant increases in unemployment in northern

Ontario. I recognize that members of the House will say that the economy has picked up, that we've moved a long way from the recession of the early 1990s in the province as a whole, but the recession has not ended in northern Ontario; it has gotten worse.

That 10% of the population that we've had historically in northern Ontario has dropped. It used to be about one million people in northern Ontario; we're down to about 800,000. There's a very simple reason: There are not the opportunities for young people to find employment in many parts of northern Ontario. Young people have left. There's been an out-migration historically in northern Ontario and it has been accelerated in the last two years.

The average age in the city of Sault Ste Marie in the early 1970s was 26; it is now 38. That is evidence of the kind of out-migration of young people that I've described. It's a very serious problem for the future of communities like Sault Ste Marie and all the other communities in northern Ontario. We have to find opportunities for young people so they don't have to move to southern Ontario or other parts of Canada or the United States or elsewhere to find employment.

The economic base in the primary and manufacturing sectors of our part of the province is eroding. Young people have fewer and fewer opportunities and have had to leave the region. As the population declines, government services have also been reduced, further damaging the region's economic base and employment base.

This government has accelerated the situation by making enormous cuts to the public sector. Initially, these enormous cuts in the Ministry of Natural Resources — in many small communities of northern Ontario it in fact was and historically has been the government as far as those communities were concerned. The Ministry of Natural Resources has been cut by 45%. Those were some of the best jobs.

The Ministry of Transportation has been cut. Ontario Hydro has been cut. The Ministry of the Environment has been cut. Because of the other cuts that this government has made in the broader public sector, jobs in the education sector — teachers and support staff — and jobs in health care, in hospitals and in community health have been lost. Those public sector jobs in many of those communities were the best-paying jobs. Some of the most well-educated people and leaders of the community were employed in those sectors. The spinoff effect of the loss of those jobs has been dramatic for the local retail sector. The economy has gone into a downturn and the private sector has not taken up the slack.

1710

At the same time we've seen the globalization of world markets. World trade has increasingly focused on high value added products such as new technology rather than the raw materials that the north's economy has been based upon. Mineral consumption has slowed globally as we recycle more, develop more efficient technologies and invent substitute materials such as ceramics, plastics, new alloys and composites. The development of fibre optics has greatly reduced the need for copper, for example.

Also, at the same time, previously underdeveloped countries of the former Soviet Union, countries in South America, are acquiring the knowledge and infrastructure to produce and export sophisticated goods in the resource field, at less cost in some cases, partly because they have lax environmental standards in many cases and also lower labour costs.

Up to now, governments, whether it's the Liberal government, the NDP government and Conservative governments before that, saw government employment as a way of stabilizing the economy of the north as the resource-based industries were downsized. This government has said goodbye to that and has made the cuts I mentioned. The effects of the public service cuts by this government are far more evident in the resource-based, one-industry towns of northern Ontario than they are in southern Ontario, and there have been devastating impacts.

I want to emphasize that while tourism is an important part of our economy, tourism alone cannot replace the jobs in manufacturing and primary industries that have been lost in northern Ontario.

We have advantages in the north, despite the fact that are long distances, great distances. In the North American market 100 million people live within a day's drive of northern Ontario; 40% of the US population lives within a day's haul by truck. We also have a very good quality of life. The lifestyle combines urban comforts in some of the cities of the north with almost instant access to the great outdoors.

The telecommunications revolution has reduced some of the barriers previously imposed on northern Ontario by its remoteness. Sophisticated telecommunications networks with instantaneous cost-effective transmission of voice and data through satellite or fibre optic networks will allow companies to locate in the north without problems posed by distance.

We've seen efforts in New Brunswick. Our government also made some efforts to emphasize some of this technology in developing call centres in our part of the province, and they're in New Brunswick, the kind of operations that can be located anywhere with the new communications technologies. But it's important that the role of government be recognized if we're going to take advantage of these opportunities, as well as meeting the challenges of the downsizing in the primary industries and the public sector.

We can't have a government that does not believe in government initiative to help to stabilize and expand the economy of the north and to meet these opportunities. It is essential for government to support the economic restructuring of northern Ontario. Areas of growth potential need to be identified and supported by government. The Ministry of Northern Development and Mines obviously has a role to play in this area, but we can't do it if we have a government whose ideology is that government shouldn't be involved, that it should be left simply to the market and the marketplace, to the private sector. Because of the distances involved, because of the low population, because of the large expansive territory, the so-called invisible

hand of the marketplace will almost inevitably decide that there should be more and more concentration where the population is located, where labour is located and where the market is located in southern Ontario.

We need government action to counter those "natural" pressures of the marketplace. The Ministry of Northern Development and Mines needs to invest in developing technology infrastructure in the north. In my view, it's the least the government can do, considering the destructive agenda of this government in its downsizing and down-loading on the people of northern Ontario.

The government should act as a coordinator of change. As I said, the government should develop a general strategy for the region that gets all government ministries working together. Existing government programs and initiatives are not sufficiently coordinated and are not part of any general strategy for the region. I suspect that's because, again, we have a government that doesn't believe in the role of government to counter the exigencies of the market.

I call on the members, I urge the members to put aside their ideological blinders and to say that we must respond to the concerns I'm raising here. We must respond to the restructuring and downsizing in northern Ontario. We must counter the out-migration of our young people. We must provide opportunities for young people to work and to live and raise their families in the communities of northern Ontario. We can't just put our backs to the north and have our feet placed squarely in North Bay and look only at southern Ontario. That has been the stance of this government.

Mr Pouliot: They don't care.

Mr Wildman: I call on the members to urge the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and all the members of the government bench to analyse seriously the problems we face in northern Ontario and to develop a strategy bringing together municipal leaders, private sector leaders, members of the government and the senior level of government, the federal government, to respond to the concerns of our hinterland of northern Ontario. I think it can be done. It's a challenge. But it certainly won't be done if we simply leave it to the private sector.

Obviously, in this kind of situation education is central to ensuring that we can help to meet these challenges. Yet, we have a government at this time that is determined to cut education and to downsize education to make it less important in terms of investment by the government.

In the budget the government talked about \$130 million for Internet networking in schools. No one knows how much of this is actually going to be government money and how much of it is private sector money. The government talks about partnerships. We don't know whether the government has really made a commitment in terms of a significant amount of money to invest in this area. This, of course, is very important in northern Ontario because of the communications challenges we face. But we can't just leave it to the private sector. Partnerships are fine. We want to know what the actual commitment is of this government.

The government also said in the budget that they will be setting aside \$1 billion total in a special fund for special education. We've done some work on this and have come to the conclusion that all the government did was add up all the money that has been spent in the past by school boards and by the provincial government and put it in a fund. There is no new money there. That is already what was spent. So while the government tries to tout this as some new initiative to assist children with special needs, there isn't anything new there. We already know that in northern Ontario there has been less investment in those students with special needs than we've had in other parts of the province historically.

The government also says they want to spend \$50 million for textbooks for the classroom and \$12.5 million for labs at the secondary school level. They want to spend \$1 million for tutoring, \$1.5 million for testing and \$69 million for school board debt. When you look at this in relation to everything else they promised, this comes close to \$200 million, which coincidentally is the amount the Treasurer expects to save from the agreement the government has made with the Ontario Teachers' Federation for the early retirement package.

In slow-growth areas like ours, the government is actually, under its funding formula, forcing the closure of schools. Because of the distances in northern Ontario, some of the schools will survive simply because it's too far to bus kids in some parts of the north.

1720

This is a government that promised to invest more in education, to put more money into classrooms; in fact, the government is closing classrooms. They're closing schools because they set an arbitrary figure from the maintenance costs and the square-footage costs of school boards, and if the board doesn't fit that average, despite the fact that there are kids being taught in those schools, there isn't any funding for them. Those schools will be closed or downsized in the cities, and in the small communities there won't be adequate funding for them even if they continue to operate because it's too far to bus them.

This is a government that hasn't made a commitment to education, that's trying to dress up their promises in the budget as new money when in fact whatever they have promised in expenditures is already there, and we have already seen almost \$1-billion cut.

I intervene in this budget debate sincerely concerned about the future of my region of this province, concerned about the fact that we need investment in public services like education, that we need a strategy developed that involves government activity to counter the pressures of the market, to respond to the serious problems we have in northern Ontario, to try and avoid the continuation of the downsizing of our population, the outmigration of our young people, to provide opportunities for development, for growth, to look at new technologies and to counter what has been accelerating in terms of the loss of jobs, the increase of unemployment in northern Ontario, since this government came into power.

The north, when you consider the contribution of wealth it has made from the primary sectors, deserves the support of this government, the government of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Baird: I congratulate my colleague the member for Algoma for his well-reasoned remarks. While I may not share the consequence of them, he certainly has brought up a number of points that cause us all concern.

As he is concerned, we on this side of the House are concerned about youth unemployment and about employment opportunities right across the province. It would be wrong to say that my part of the province is anything like his, but my part of the province in Ottawa-Carleton did suffer 20,000 or 25,000 cuts, people who lost their jobs in the public sector, so we have some experience with some pretty dramatic declines in public expenditures by the federal, provincial and local governments. It's a significant challenge, and I certainly acknowledge that.

He did mention some very valid points, and I give him credit for mentioning those: the decline in demand for natural resource commodities, the decline in prices and the new competition in eastern Europe. To be fair, he did acknowledge that. I guess he sees a bigger role for the government stabilizing the economy. That was the same policy he took in southern Ontario, and with the greatest of respect, I don't think that served the province well over his five years in government. He makes a well-reasoned argument for the expansion of the role of government. It's one that I don't think we on this side of the House accept.

I would like to comment, though. The member for Lac-Nipigon interjected and said, "They don't care." I don't think, even in the worst, darkest days of the recession, even with the disastrous policies brought in by the former government, that anyone on this side of the House would say you didn't care or question motive in that way. I don't think you serve your case very well.

Obviously, there are some significant investments in transportation infrastructure, and whatever those investments are, I can appreciate they are never enough. Exploring new communications technologies in health care and education and reinstating the heritage fund are some of the initiatives taken to try to improve the economy of northern Ontario.

Mr Patten: It's a pleasure for me to respond to the member for Algoma. I thought he provided some very sound arguments.

One argument I would like to underline that I think he makes and that I totally agree with is that when you cut around the province in some fundamental areas, it has greater significance in northern Ontario, and perhaps in parts of eastern Ontario and some other parts as well, than in the metropolitan, big, urban areas of Ontario. That goes without saying in terms of education, health and municipalities in all the cuts we've seen.

He touched on something that I think is significant and important, and I haven't seen too much of a demonstration of this kind of sensitivity. I wouldn't say it's not necessarily a caring issue, but it does show sensitivity. The issue is the sharing of the infrastructure of the Ontario public

service, its services and all the things that it does. Do we share the infrastructure of the government of Ontario equally? I would say no, we don't.

I recall back in 1989 when I was Minister of Government Services and was asked to head up a northern relocation program that built five new buildings in northern Ontario and brought well over 600 jobs to northern Ontario. There were campaigns to invite people from Toronto and other parts of the "south" to come to northern Ontario and see what a beautiful part of the province it is, with a beautiful way of life, less costly etc. To place a more significant point on it, the member referred to jobs and to the diversification of the economy of northern Ontario in many instances. Fifteen jobs in a small town is a lot of jobs; 25 jobs over here etc. We were talking hundreds of jobs.

I think it's important. It's a philosophical question: What is our responsibility related to sharing the infrastructure of Ontario government.

Mr Pouliot: Who else but the dean of the House — more than 23 years of service, politics being local — uses the opportunity of his budget response to say: "What about the forgotten? What about the special people? Fewer than 10% of the population covering well over 80% of the land mass." Different indeed; not unique, but different.

Where else but at tide in the province of Ontario? Hudson Bay, beluga whales, polar bears, caribou, permafrost. Need I say more? Resource base indeed we are. We choose to live there to extract the resources: trees that we send down south; pulp and paper; precious minerals; other stones.

We need help. We need reciprocity. That's what the member for Algoma reminded us of. We need a helping hand so we don't end up post grade 12 and 13 education exporting our dollars. And what about us? As a grand finale, we too have to leave the north. There has to be a different legacy.

The member for Nepean, who's new around here — hopefully for his sake and the sake of his family he will not be an overnighter — has the audacity and the gall to say: "Oh, don't tell us that we don't care. Look at what we've done with the heritage fund." It's true they put money in the heritage fund, but they left it there. They didn't spend it.

The people of the north, in unison, are telling him and his colleagues: "Can you see us? Can you hear our voice? Spend the money."

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Mr Pouliot: Collective guilt has overtaken the hordes on the government side. It's a sad scene. All they have to do it give us a budget that represents all Ontarians, not only a select few down south.

Mr Galt: I certainly enjoyed the presentation made by the member for Algoma; it was a very impassioned, well-reasoned presentation.

He talked a lot about the reduction in staff that the various ministries have had to carry out. The member for

Algoma should be aware that when we came to government we were in a crisis. It was a genuine crisis in Ontario, a crisis that had been created by the previous government, while the NDP was in government. The debt doubled. They did not have the intestinal fortitude that the Liberals had to increase taxes. They only moved the tax freedom day from June 21 to June 26, but they did double the debt. That's the interest we're now paying: \$9 billion in interest, just a terrible sum to put in the backs of our children and future generations. It's half of the health budget. It would be a major portion of the education budget. At the most —

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Galt: Certainly a very unfortunate circumstance.

The member for Algoma talked an awful lot about developing a strategy for the north, which may not be a bad idea, but I'm wondering what their party was doing for five years in government, 1990 to 1995. I'd have thought they would have come in with a good strategy when they had so many representatives here from northern Ontario.

1730

Just one example of the many things that we're doing for northern Ontario is the new funding formula that is going to recognize equalization for a lot of the schools in the north. They were getting funding like \$4,500, \$4,800 per student. Now it's going to be averaged, equalized across the province, and that's the kind of recognition that we're making of the north.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Algoma, you have two minutes.

Mr Wildman: I want to thank the members for their interventions, their comments. I'll try to deal with them briefly and quickly. I know the member for Nepean is correct in saying that we have a difference of opinion about the role of the government in stabilizing the economy of the north and developing a strategy. I would point out that the government hadn't spent any of the money in the northern heritage fund because it doesn't have a strategy.

We do have a difference of opinion. I heard from members on the opposite side what they disagreed with in my presentation. I appreciate that they listened to me and were attentive, but they didn't give me any idea of what their alternative is. What are we going to do to meet this enormous challenge in northern Ontario? It was asked what we did. I can tell you what we did.

In the depths of the recession we met the challenge of restructuring in Kapuskasing, at Spruce Falls, and preserved jobs there. We met the challenge of restructuring in Thunder Bay. We met the challenge of restructuring in Sault Ste Marie with Algoma Steel; not just Algoma Steel but also St Mary's Paper and the Algoma Central Railway. We preserved jobs in those areas.

I know that Mr Long, an adviser to the Premier of the province now, said quite clearly that if the Conservatives had been in power in 1992, there would have been no restructuring program for Algoma Steel and 5,000 people

would have been out of work because this government doesn't believe in the role of government to try to preserve jobs and develop a strategy for expansion of the economy.

What else did we do? As the member for Ottawa Centre said, we transferred government jobs to northern Ontario. We had the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, the Ministry of Natural Resources. The lottery corporation was expanded in northern Ontario. This government is taking those jobs away and concentrating them in southern Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Further debate?

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I'd like to share my time with the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale if possible, please. Today it's rather a unique and pleasant thing for me to be part of this budget debate. I'm going to talk a bit about it, not only from my —

The Acting Speaker: Order. I'm sorry, I wasn't listening when you first introduced your remarks. You wanted to share your time, except that we're ending at 5:45. We'll vote at 5:45. Do you want to split your time in whatever time is left?

Mr Stewart: No, I'll just keep talking for a while.

I want to talk about the budget from the perspective of being a member of this Parliament, but also from the business perspective, from the job creator sector, because all of you know that jobs are created by people, not governments. One of the things that really got me extremely excited, when I looked at this budget, as I have been for two and a half years, was when it said at various times during that budget, "Promises made, promises kept."

Isn't that about one of the most refreshing things that we've heard in a long time? I've been involved with governments for a good number of years, some a little too long, and I've worked under various governments. But I have never been involved and seen a government that said they would do something and indeed did it. That, to me, is one of the most refreshing things that could have happened. We did it.

For many of us in this House, certainly on the government side, who went out and told people prior to the election, "If we are elected we will do things, we will stimulate the economy, we will reduce taxes, we will increase jobs," many of us who have had a reputation for being trustworthy believed that, and we have indeed done just that and I am extremely proud of that fact.

This is a people's budget. It's an incentive budget. It is a growth agenda, a growth budget. It's a budget filled with strategic investments for the future. That is one of the problems: that many governments, certainly in the last 10 years, forgot to look at the future.

All you have to do is look at the health care system, where we don't have enough long-term beds. We have to change the way we deliver health care, because nobody pre-planned. For those of you who are in business, I can assure you, if you don't pre-plan you will not survive.

I happened to listen to the member for Algoma, who said they invested a great deal of money in the north to save jobs. Ladies and gentlemen, I can tell you one thing:

Buying jobs does not make jobs last. It absolutely does not.

I mentioned that this is a people's budget. It's a budget that addresses those from all walks of life. It addresses the business community, not only the corporate tax reduction over a period of eight years but also the income tax reduction. It addresses those who require and are on social services, including day care access. It addresses the needed long-term care: 20,000 beds in this province, when many communities have been waiting since 1988 to get some additional beds that nobody, no other government, wanted to create.

Those needing medical treatment: We have made some changes. It used to be that to get medical treatment you walked into a square building with bricks and mortar that said "Hospital" on the top. That is not the way of the future. There is not a person in this House who doesn't know that if we don't change the way we're delivering some services, those services are not going to survive.

It's interesting in my own community. For the last year and a half I have listened to the folks from that community on what they wanted to see in health care. They wanted more critical care beds. They wanted more operating rooms. They wanted more mental health beds. They wanted more money invested. If you want that, you have to make some changes. If you don't want that, fine, we'll stay the way we are. But staying the way we are will not create the type of quality health care that we need in this province.

Children's aid society: an injection of \$170 million. For those of you who were in municipal politics, you know that for the last many years, children's aid societies, which the municipalities funded, were crying for more and more money because the need was greater. We have addressed that situation.

I mentioned that the final one is safe communities. When I read the paper, whether it be the Peterborough paper or a Toronto paper, and see the things that have been going on in the streets — crime in our communities, death for our youth, death for our seniors — we have to look at creating safe communities, communities that are working together to make sure that crime does not run rampant, and this government is addressing that. Crime can be down, but until crime is alleviated — that's what we've got to look at. Don't just look at the little parts of it; you've got to look at the entire picture.

1740

This budget was created by people — and I'm very proud of this fact — who went to various meetings, through consultation. In my own community I had one with 20 to 30 people at it. They represented all sectors of society — the workers, the business community, health care workers, youth, folks involved with social services; it was the public sector and the private sector. Those were the people who were at my round table. Those were the people who were involved when the Premier went out into places like Oshawa and Barrie and many other places in the immediate area to talk to the people and said to them, "You tell me what you believe you want to see, how this

province should move forward." They told him, and that is what created many of the things addressed in this budget.

I know the opposition won't agree with that. The opposition still believes, for some unknown reason, that the way you conduct government is to raise taxes and spend like crazy. You cannot do that. You know it and I know it. You don't do it in business; you don't do it in your homes. Then why in the name of goodness would you do it in government?

Jobs up, taxes down: Isn't that what it's all about? Do you know that in the county of Peterborough, including the city, when the final stage of the 30% tax reduction is in place there will be an injection of \$40 million that will be able to be spent in that community? I suggest to you that this will make the cash registers ring for the business community, for those people who are creating those jobs.

I listen to the opposition say things like, "They're McDonald's jobs." Well, I'm sorry, but if you've sat at home or have tried to get a job for two or three years and all of a sudden somebody phones you and says, "You've got that job," it doesn't matter whether it's a McDonald's job or a high-tech job or a medium-sized job; it's a job. I can tell you, from folks I talk to who finally have the opportunity to become part of the working community, it is probably one of the greatest experiences and feelings you can have. Wouldn't it be wonderful to run home and say to your kids, "Kids, I got a job"?

Mr Ron Johnson (Brantford): Self-worth.

Mr Stewart: The member for Brantford is right: self-worth. It is absolutely wonderful.

A balanced budget — isn't that absolutely unique in government? It hasn't happened in years in this province. The folks laugh about it, but they didn't do it. You balance your budget at home. Why wouldn't you do it here? You balance your budget in business. Why wouldn't you do it here? That's why we have to continue on the road to make sure that the budget will be balanced. This budget says that; this government will do it.

As I mentioned before, I feel very proud to stand and make comments on this budget, a budget that will continue to make sure we have a direction for the future, a budget that will make sure all of us have those jobs — our children, our grandchildren.

Mr Wildman: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I rise to ask for unanimous consent to have the late show that the member for Cochrane South gave notice about on Thursday after the end of the day rather than this evening, since the representatives aren't available this evening.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Agreed? Agreed.

On Tuesday, May 5, 1998, Mr Eves moved, seconded by Mr Harris, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

On Wednesday, May 6, 1998, Mr McGuinty moved that the motion moved by the Minister of Finance on May 5, "That this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government," be amended by deleting the words following the words "That this House" and adding thereto the following:

"Recognizing that this hit-and-run budget is designed to distract the people of Ontario from three years of cuts, chaos and a record of broken promises; and

"That Mike Harris broke his promise not to close hospitals; and

"That Mike Harris broke his promise not to expand casino gambling; and" —

Mr Baird: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense?

Interjections: No.

The Speaker: "That Mike Harris has cut \$870 million from hospitals and has fired over 10,000 nurses and front-line workers since taking office; and"

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Nepean, "Order" means "Come to order." Thanks.

"That Mike Harris broke his promise that there would be no new user fees in Ontario when he forced seniors and the poor to pay an additional \$225 million in new user fees for prescription medication; and

"That the Mike Harris government has delisted over \$170 million annually in OHIP services; and

"That the Mike Harris government has left 17,901 patients on waiting lists for long-term-care beds in Ontario; and"

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Huron, come to order. Member for Rexdale as well. People have a right to know what they're voting on. They've asked that it be read. You have to let them hear it.

Interjection.

The Speaker: And member for Scarborough East, I don't want to hear from you.

"That the Mike Harris government cut \$533 million from classrooms and plans to cut an additional \$900 million from our schools through his new funding formula; and

"That 22 school boards have cut junior kindergarten, 53 boards have cut special education and 21 school boards have cut adult education; and

"That Mike Harris has raised tuition fees by 60% and has deregulated tuition fees for graduate, professional and some college programs; and

"That Mike Harris has cut \$65 million from child care; and

"That Mike Harris has failed to implement the recommendations of the coroners' juries to prevent further cases of child abuse and death; and

"That Mike Harris has cut \$50.4 million to services for developmentally disabled children and adults, \$8 million to children's mental health services and reduced access to mental services for children; and

"That Mike Harris has failed to listen to the public's concerns over deteriorating patient care; and

"That after all this, Mike Harris has failed to balance the budget because of his irresponsible tax cut; and

"That Mike Harris has proved that he simply cannot be trusted to protect our health care, to improve our education or to take the steps necessary to make sure our children get off to the best start in life;

"Therefore, this House has lost confidence in this government."

On Thursday, May 7, 1998, Mr Hampton moved that the amendment to the motion be amended by inserting after the words "the best start in life" the following:

Mr Baird: Dispense.

The Speaker: I've already requested to dispense and they didn't agree.

"and

"That the government's phoney tax scheme will continue to cause damage to Ontario's health care, education and other vital services until reversed by a future government."

The first question to be decided is the amendment to the amendment to the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House that Mr Hampton's amendment to the amendment to the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 15-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1750 to 1805.

The Speaker: All those in favour of Mr Hampton's amendment to the amendment to the motion will please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Martin, Tony
Boyd, Marion	Lankin, Frances	Pouliot, Gilles
Christopherson, David	Lessard, Wayne	Silipo, Tony
Churley, Marilyn	Marchese, Rosario	Wildman, Bud
Hampton, Howard	Martel, Shelley	Wood, Len

The Speaker: All those opposed, please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Gerretsen, John	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Armott, Ted	Gilchrist, Steve	Parker, John L.
Baird, John R.	Grandmaître, Bernard	Patten, Richard
Barrett, Toby	Gravelle, Michael	Pettit, Trevor
Bartolucci, Rick	Guzzo, Garry J.	Phillips, Gerry
Bassett, Isabel	Hardeman, Ernie	Preston, Peter
Beaubien, Marcel	Harris, Michael D.	Pupatello, Sandra
Boushy, Dave	Hastings, John	Ramsay, David
Bradley, James J.	Hodgson, Chns	Ross, Lillian
Brown, Jim	Hoy, Pat	Runciman, Robert W.
Carroll, Jack	Hudak, Tim	Ruprecht, Tony
Castrilli, Annamarie	Jackson, Cameron	Sampson, Rob
Cleary, John C.	Johns, Helen	Saunderson, William
Clement, Tony	Johnson, Bert	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	Johnson, David	Smith, Bruce
Conway, Sean G.	Jordan, W. Leo	Spina, Joseph
Cullen, Alex	Kells, Morley	Sterling, Norman W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Kennedy, Gerard	Stewart, R. Gary
Danford, Harry	Klees, Frank	Tascona, Joseph N.
DeFaria, Carl	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Tilson, David
Doyle, Ed	Leadstone, Gary L.	Tsubouchi, David H.
Duncan, Dwight	McGuinity, Dalton	Turnbull, David
Elliott, Brenda	McLean, Allan K.	Vankoughnet, Bill

Eves, Ernie L.
Fisher, Barbara
Flaherty, Jim
Ford, Douglas B.
Froese, Tom
Galt, Doug

McLeod, Lyn
Miclash, Frank
Morin, Gilles E.
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
Newman, Dan

Villeneuve, Noble
Wilson, Jim
Wood, Bob
Young, Terence H.

The Speaker: All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 15; the nays are 85.

The Speaker: I declare the amendment to the amendment motion lost.

The second question to be decided is the amendment to the motion.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent to put all of the questions immediately without bells after there is a division.

The Speaker: Is there agreement to have no bells for the next two votes? Agreed? Agreed.

Is it the pleasure of the House that Mr McGuinty's amendment to the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic
Bartolucci, Rick
Bisson, Gilles
Boyd, Marion
Bradley, James J.
Castrilli, Annamaria
Christopherson, David
Churley, Marilyn
Cleary, John C.
Colle, Mike
Conway, Sean G.
Cullen, Alex
Duncan, Dwight
Gerretsen, John

Grandmaître, Bernard
Gravelle, Michael
Hampton, Howard
Hoy, Pat
Kennedy, Gerard
Kormos, Peter
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Lankin, Frances
Lessard, Wayne
Marchese, Rosario
Martel, Shelley
Martin, Tony
McGuinty, Dalton

McLeod, Lyn
Miclash, Frank
Morin, Gilles E.
Patten, Richard
Phillips, Gerry
Pouliot, Gilles
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramsay, David
Ruprecht, Tony
Sergio, Mario
Silipo, Tony
Wildman, Bud
Wood, Len

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Bassett, Isabel
Beaubien, Marcel
Boushy, Dave
Brown, Jim
Carroll, Jack
Clement, Tony
Cunningham, Dianne
Danford, Harry
DeFaria, Carl
Doyle, Ed
Elliott, Brenda
Eves, Ernie L.
Fisher, Barbara
Flaherty, Jim
Ford, Douglas B.
Froese, Tom
Galt, Doug

Gilchrist, Steve
Guzzo, Garry J.
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael D.
Hastings, John
Hodgson, Chris
Hudak, Tim
Jackson, Cameron
Johns, Helen
Johnson, Bert
Johnson, David
Jordan, W. Leo
Kells, Morley
Klees, Frank
Leadston, Gary L.
McLean, Allan K.
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
Newman, Dan
Ouellette, Jerry J.

Parker, John L.
Pettit, Trevor
Preston, Peter
Ross, Lillian
Runciman, Robert W.
Sampson, Rob
Saunderson, William
Smith, Bruce
Spina, Joseph
Sterling, Norman W.
Stewart, R. Gary
Tascona, Joseph N.
Tilson, David
Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Vankoughnet, Bill
Villeneuve, Noble
Wilson, Jim
Wood, Bob
Young, Terence H.

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 40; the nays are 60.

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

We now come to the motion of Mr Eves that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Same vote reversed? Agreed? Agreed.

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 60; the nays are 40.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It is now after 6 of the clock. This House stands adjourned till 6:30 of the clock today.

The House adjourned at 1814.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

ERRATUM

No.	Page	Column	Line(s)	Should read:
10A	444	1	3	I'm advised that as a rule of thumb, \$1 billion of

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma	Wildman, Bud (ND)	Etobicoke West / -Ouest	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Speaker / Président
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Fort William	McLeod, Lyn (L)
Beaches-Woodbine	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Fort York	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Brampton North / -Nord	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Frontenac-Addington	Vankoughnet, Bill (PC)
Brampton South / -Sud	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)
Brant-Haldimand	Preston, Peter L. (PC)	Guelph	Elliott, Brenda (PC)
Brantford	Johnson, Ron (PC)	Halton Centre / -Centre	Young, Terence H. (PC)
Bruce	Fisher, Barbara (PC)	Halton North / -Nord	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Burlington South / -Sud	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Seniors Issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (Affaires des personnes âgées)	Hamilton Centre / -Centre	Christopherson, David (ND)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Carleton	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of the Environment, government House leader / ministre de l'Environnement, leader parlementaire du gouvernement	Hamilton Mountain	Pettit, Trevor (PC)
Carleton East / -Est	Morin, Gilles E. (L)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Ross, Lillian (PC)
Chatham-Kent	Carroll, Jack (PC)	Hastings-Peterborough	Danford, Harry (PC)
Cochrane North / -Nord	Wood, Len (ND)	High Park-Swansea	Shea, Derwyn (PC)
Cochrane South / -Sud	Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Huron	Johns, Helen (PC)
Cornwall	Cleary, John C. (L)	Kenora	Miclash, Frank (L)
Don Mills	Johnson, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Education and Training / ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Dovercourt	Silipo, Tony (ND)	Kitchener	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Downsview	Castrilli, Annamarie (L)	Kitchener-Wilmot	Leadston, Gary L. (PC)
Dufferin-Peel	Tilson, David (PC)	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	Pouliot, Gilles (ND)
Durham Centre / -Centre	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Labour, Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / ministre du Travail, solliciteur général et ministre des Services correctionnels	Lambton	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Durham East / -Est	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Lanark-Renfrew	Jordan, W. Leo (PC)
Durham West / -Ouest	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires	Lawrence	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
Durham-York	Munro, Julia (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
Elgin	Saunderson, William (PC)	Lincoln	Sheehan, Frank (PC)
Elgin	North, Peter (Ind)	London Centre / -Centre	Boyd, Marion (ND)
Essex-Kent	Hoy, Pat (L)	London North / -Nord	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Essex South / -Sud	Crozier, Bruce (L)	London South / -Sud	Wood, Bob (PC)
Etobicoke-Humber	Ford, Douglas B. (PC)	Markham	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)	Middlesex	Smith, Bruce (PC)
Etobicoke-Rexdale	Hastings, John (PC)	Mississauga East / -Est	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
		Mississauga North / -Nord	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
		Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Children's Issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (enfance)

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Mississauga West / -Ouest	Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Privatization) / ministre sans portefeuille (privatisation)	St Catharines-Brock St George-St David	Froese, Tom (PC) Leach, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne	Grimmett, Bill (PC)		Boushy, Dave (PC)
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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Deuxième session, 36^e législature

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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 12 May 1998

Mardi 12 mai 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 12 May 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 12 mai 1998

The House met at 1831.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

NORTHERN SERVICES IMPROVEMENT ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION DES SERVICES PUBLICS DANS LE NORD DE L'ONTARIO

Hon Mr Hodgson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 12, An Act to provide choice and flexibility to Northern Residents in the establishment of service delivery mechanisms that recognize the unique circumstances of Northern Ontario and to allow increased efficiency and accountability in Area-wide Service Delivery / Projet de loi 12, Loi visant à offrir aux résidents du Nord plus de choix et de souplesse dans la mise en place de mécanismes de prestation des services qui tiennent compte de la situation unique du Nord de l'Ontario et à permettre l'accroissement de l'efficacité et de la responsabilité en ce qui concerne la prestation des services à l'échelle régionale.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: Perhaps we should have a quorum in the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Clerk, could you check and see if there is a quorum, please.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: Madam Speaker, a quorum is now present.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I'm delighted to have the opportunity to contribute and lead off debate on second reading of the Northern Services Improvement Act.

The Northern Services Improvement Act is all about good government, better and more efficient services at a lower cost to the taxpayer. The Northern Services Improvement Act reaffirms what we've been telling northerners, and all Ontarians, since this government was elected: that the best way to deliver efficient local services is to give municipalities the tools they need to help

themselves. Our reintroduction of this bill speaks to that commitment.

We are bringing meaningful change to the way local services will be delivered in the future. We've consulted extensively with our northern partners on how they wanted their local service bodies to be organized. My parliamentary assistant, Joe Spina, and our ministry staff have been involved in many meetings, discussions and consultations on our proposed legislation. We've met with many municipal leaders.

We've met with umbrella associations: the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities, FONOM; the North-western Ontario Municipal Association, NOMA. We've been involved in an ongoing dialogue with Team North, a group of northern representatives specifically called together to consult on this legislation. And we've met with representatives of unorganized communities.

We would like to thank our many municipal partners for their insights, their guidance, their spirit and the plain hard work that they have done during the preparation process for this bill. I'm proud to say that this bill has been developed through a process which should be held as an excellent example of cooperation and partnership. With our proposed legislation, we will be delivering on our promise to give northerners a plan designed to meet their unique governance needs.

I'd like to outline briefly how this act will do just that.

The most important component of the NSI act is the establishment of service delivery bodies known as area service boards, or ASBs. These area service boards will provide an alternative for delivery and funding of certain key services in northern Ontario.

I want to stress that this is enabling legislation. The legislation will allow municipalities and unincorporated areas in northern Ontario to consolidate the delivery of core social and community health services, as well as a range of optional services, if they so desire.

ASBs would initially be responsible for delivering Ontario Works, child care and social housing programs. They would be responsible for three more services as well — land ambulance, public health and municipal homes for the aged — to be phased in later. These new service delivery bodies would be administered by a board consisting of elected representatives and have direct taxing authority to recover costs for services delivered.

ASBs would make it easier to achieve greater efficiency and cost savings in service delivery by consolidating a number of single-purpose bodies into one effective, locally accountable delivery agency.

Area service boards will only be created where groups of communities want them. At the same time, however, they are an important part of a plan to make governments more efficient at all levels. Our government has repeatedly urged northern areas to avail themselves of this tool once it is legislated.

Several groups of communities have begun to discuss the prospect of establishing their own ASB. In fact, some groups of communities — in the ridings of Rainy River and Kenora, for example — have already put together ASB proposals and are awaiting proclamation of the legislation to implement their plans.

With this legislation in hand, northern municipal leaders will be able to bring forward local governance proposals tailor-made to suit the needs of their communities and unincorporated areas. They will select boundaries that result in the best balance of cost-effectiveness and cost fairness in the face of local realities.

A unique aspect of this legislation, as I indicated earlier, is that area service boards are an optional tool. Communities in the north can, if they wish, choose not to join together to deliver these services.

Until ASB legislation is passed — and with the cooperation of our friends across the way, we hope it will be sooner rather than later — some delivery mechanisms will take the form of district social service administration boards, or DSSABs. DSSABs and ASBs are important steps down the road of cost savings and efficiencies that northern taxpayers have been demanding.

What makes area service boards truly different is that the people of northern Ontario, along with their municipal leaders, will have a chance to frame ASBs to meet particular local needs. Northerners tell us that a cookie-cutter approach would not work in their unique environment. This proposed legislation shows that we have listened to what they had to say.

Another important feature of this proposed legislation is that ASB administrators will be drawn from the ranks of existing elected officials across northern Ontario. We will not create new bureaucracies. Like the other service delivery initiatives of this government, this will make it possible to find savings by reducing waste and duplication at the local level.

Think of the possibilities. Instead of individual municipal bureaucracies delivering Ontario Works within an area, only one administrative structure would exist. This would reduce the administration costs substantially and result in substantial savings to the area. Think of this in terms of the whole range of local services delivered today by municipalities and do the math. The potential for economies of scale are there.

It is also significant to note that ASBs would be directly accountable to the municipalities and unincorporated areas which they serve. Our government has always maintained that accountable governments are good governments. Services administered at the local level are likely to be of a higher quality and more relevant to the local constituents.

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The bill also contains provisions to reform local service boards in northern Ontario to provide them with the authority to deliver road services. Local service boards, for those colleagues of mine who are unfamiliar with the concept, are volunteer-based organizations that coordinate the delivery of certain services, including fire protection, recreation, water and sewage, street lighting and garbage collection in unorganized townships in northern Ontario.

This proposed reform to the LSBs responds to a need identified by northerners for a more coordinated approach to local service delivery. The changes are designed to lower costs and lessen volunteer burnout in communities where no municipal government exists. Clearly the result will be better services at a lower cost to every northern taxpayer.

I appreciate having the opportunity to participate in this debate and I urge all my colleagues on this side of the House and across the House floor to support passage of this enabling legislation that northern communities have asked for.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Frank Michlash (Kenora): I will speak to a greater extent on this later on as the debate takes place, but as the minister has indicated, this is something that northern municipalities have been looking for. Unfortunately, it was something that was tabled during the last session and did not come through, to the detriment of a good number of municipalities, as was indicated to him in a great number of cases.

I think what the northern municipalities are looking for — again, I'll get into it in more depth later on — is a little bit more leadership from this government. They find that they're being left out in terms of a lot of decisions. The minister has travelled in that region to find that out from them. They're asking where the minister was on a great number of issues.

The minister, in his opening remarks, has indicated that, yes, there are some very unique circumstances faced by the citizens of northern Ontario, a good number of them my constituents. As I indicated earlier this week in responding to comments made by a member regarding the budget, there weren't a great number of very positive headlines regarding the budget in terms of northern Ontario. We are seeing a lack of concern, a lack of leadership and a lack of the real awareness of the unique needs of northern Ontario, in particular northwestern Ontario.

As I indicated, I will be getting into a good number of these issues as we move on into the debate but, again, I just have to bring to the attention of the members, particularly on the government side, that they must get out, they must learn why northern Ontario is different and what the unique circumstances of northern Ontario are. The Premier earlier on obviously didn't realize that when he reintroduced the registration fee on the drivers of northwestern Ontario. But, again, more detail later.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): In the short time, I want to get an opportunity to put on the record a response to some of the things the minister said.

There are parts of this bill that I have actually no problem with. Just to clarify, the government, as everybody would remember, introduced Bill 26 a couple of years back, in the fall of 1995. In Bill 26, they set up a forced amalgamation process; that is, the government could go in by decree and decide which municipalities would be put together. Once they started the process, the government just decided what happened.

In this particular bill, I've got to say that the government has got it partly right, because what they've decided to do with the ASBs is to make it enabling legislation. On the enabling part, Minister, I have no problem with you. If there is going to be any kind of amalgamation, if there is going to be any kind of restructuring at the local level, I think it has to be locally driven. I think the taxpayers in local municipalities and the councils, mayors and reeves are the ones who should drive it, just like we should have allowed the people of Toronto to decide for themselves. Should there be a megacity or not should have been a decision of the people of the city of Toronto, just like in the city of Ottawa we should allow the people in the local communities of Ottawa, Carleton, Nepean and all those other areas, the people in that jurisdiction, to decide for themselves what is best for their community.

So in that sense of the bill, I partly support what the government does with ASBs, because they're making it enabling and they're saying that the people within the communities themselves can decide if they want to come together. For that, you're right.

I have a problem, however, with other parts of the bill. One is that this is a move to tax unorganized communities. If you end up taking some of those services out and the ASBs start taking on some of the responsibility for some of those new services, it's going to mean that unorganized communities are going to be taxed at almost the municipal rate, and with that I have a great problem. We're going to have to talk about that a little bit more in further debate in order to see what we can do there.

Mr John L. Parker (York East): I want to congratulate the minister for bringing forward this bill, which is an act to provide choice and flexibility to northern residents in the establishment of service delivery mechanisms. This is in fact a bill that recognizes the unique circumstances of northern Ontario, and it allows increased efficiency and accountability in area-wide service delivery, particularly in the north.

In bringing about this bill, I know that the minister travelled far and wide throughout the north country. I know that because I travelled with him on some of those visits. I know he sent his parliamentary assistant throughout the north, and I travelled with his parliamentary assistant also in the consultation process leading up to this bill. I am very impressed with the process that led to this bill. I believe that it does respond to the messages we heard in the various communities of the north for flexibility in how to address the matter of local service delivery.

I congratulate the minister for bringing forward the bill, I congratulate the minister for the process that underlies the development of the bill and I commend his remarks

this evening in describing the nature of the bill and recommending it to this House.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I'm glad to have an opportunity to respond to the minister's opening comments. I think you need to go back and have perhaps a little bit of a history lesson. The reason why this particular legislation is being brought forward, in many ways, and the reason why municipalities are being put in the position that they're in is because it's part of the downloading process of this government.

We have fought vigorously in this Legislature against large parts of the downloading program that were announced during megaweek back in January 1997. One of the elements that I think is most upsetting to a lot of municipalities is public health. One sees public health being part of this umbrella legislation and the municipalities are going to need some help to be able to deliver the services, but the fact is that public health should not be part of the downloading process at all. There is still a battle raging over that and I think a number of the municipalities in northern Ontario would really like it to be stated again and again that aspects of this downloading, such as public health, simply shouldn't be there.

If the government is not willing to accept its responsibilities, I think it's our responsibility to tell the people of this province that indeed they have erred and they are wrong to do so. To put these kinds of pressures on the municipalities I think is unfortunate.

I can tell you there's still a great deal of confusion related to this piece of legislation. There's not a great sense of security from a lot of the municipalities that are obviously being affected by this, and there is not a great deal of trust. Although it is indeed enabling legislation, there's also a real sense out there that, regardless of what the legislation may say, municipalities are going to be forced into doing what the government's agenda is anyway.

These are concerns that I think we will all be addressing to some extent as the evening debate carries on. I know myself and my colleagues are looking forward to having a further opportunity to speak. There is much to be said and I appreciate having this opportunity at this time.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister, you have two minutes.

Hon Mr Hodgson: I want to thank my colleagues across the floor from Kenora and Cochrane South, my colleague from York East and my other colleague from Port Arthur for their heartfelt support of this bill. I think they recognize that this is a unique bill for northern Ontario. It's not being forced on municipalities. I think the member for Cochrane South talked about that and he was fully supportive of allowing northerners to decide their own destiny on how they run their local governments.

I was interested to hear from my Liberal colleague. The member from Kenora talked about the lack of leadership, that the government's not forcing its agenda hard enough, and his colleague from Port Arthur, who's also a provincial Liberal, talks about how the government's forcing its agenda. As usual, the Liberal party's got one on one side and one on the other so they can please everyone.

What we've tried to do is give municipalities the tools to align themselves and deliver their services more effectively and efficiently and accountably to their ratepayers. This is what I've heard right across northern Ontario: "All of government shouldn't be dictated from Queen's Park. You should allow some flexibility for local circumstances." That is what we're doing.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): How come you didn't do that with education?

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Hamilton Centre, come to order, please.

Mr Christopherson: He's being provocative, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Hon Mr Hodgson: I notice that the opposition tonight — they're paid to be critics — talk about downloading. What they don't talk about is uploading, the fact that Bill 160 required an uploading of education off of the property tax. That arrangement was a \$3-billion trade. If they're talking about undoing Bill 160, are they proposing to raise property taxes? I think that's what they're suggesting.

I do look forward to the debate tonight. I know that all of my colleagues represent their constituents and I know the members from Kenora, Port Arthur and Cochrane South know that their residents have asked for this and that the government is responding to their direct request.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

1850

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I'm happy to be able to take part in this discussion, talking about Bill 12. I would suggest from the outset that it has nothing to do with choice and accountability.

Madam Speaker, just before I get into this, I am going to be sharing my time with the member for Timiskaming, Mr Ramsay, and I thank you for that.

Might I suggest to the members in the House and to the gallery that this is not about choice and flexibility; it is about a government forcing something upon the northern Ontario people, the municipalities of northern Ontario, the governing bodies of northern Ontario, and it's something they have a great deal of concern with.

Before I get into the debate, I'd like to talk a little bit about process, because I believe process here is quite important. The minister suggested that he has had extensive consultations. Might I tell you that this legislation was first introduced on December 15, 1997. It was tabled and died on the order paper when the House prorogued on December 18. I was given the assurance from the minister and the parliamentary assistant that between December and when the House resumed, there would be extensive consultation on Bill 174, as it was formerly known; now we know that the bill is called Bill 12.

During the legislative break, there wasn't that enormous consultation that the government wants you to believe there was. In fact, when we phoned the parliamentary assistant's staff asking for copies of formal submissions and a timetable of the meetings, the parliamentary assistant's staff told us that there were very few meetings, that they were on an informal basis and that there were very few written submissions. I was concerned

about that, so I asked the parliamentary assistant if in fact that was the case. He suggested to me that there were formal discussions, that there were formal presentations.

I guess the process then has to be questioned. If there were these formal presentations and discussions, why did the parliamentary assistant's staff not share the information with us? I guess that's a part of the problem that people in northern Ontario have about the Mike Harris government. They just don't seem to trust the Mike Harris government, and I guess I have to agree with the people from northern Ontario when I say that I asked, they told me, and then tonight we find out that in fact the government says there were formal consultations.

I would suggest to you that in an informal poll I took today, I phoned municipalities across northern Ontario and they said they weren't consulted. They were concerned that they weren't consulted; in fact, some municipalities in northern Ontario are insulted that they weren't consulted. They're also insulted that this legislation is being brought forth this evening, when at NOMA two weekends ago and at the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities last Thursday and Friday, there was very, very limited time spent by the ministry staff or by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing staff on presenting this legislation to the politicians who were at both those conferences.

I will suggest to you that there was a workshop at FONOM — I talked to people who were at the workshop — but there was very little time for dialogue, for exchange of ideas. I guess that's a concern that the municipalities have in northern Ontario as well, that for some reason — and I would hope for the goodness of democracy that it's an illusion on the part of the politicians in northern Ontario, but by past practice I think that not to be the case — this government, by past practice and by present practice, has got people to the point where they just don't trust the process any more. That's sad, because this is a significant piece of legislation and it's going to have a significant impact on every municipality, every area in northern Ontario, both organized and unorganized.

I believe that fair exchange of information is important with this bill, I believe that complete exchange of opinions and information would have been important with this bill, and I'm afraid that just didn't take place. Because that didn't take place, there's a great deal of confusion out there in northern Ontario, an enormous number of questions being asked to which they have received no answers.

A part of the problem that the government is going to have once it passes this legislation — and it's going to pass this legislation because it has a majority in the House — is that it is going to have to try to ensure that those municipalities, those unorganized areas in northern Ontario, understand the significant impact that area service boards are going to have on their lives and on their ability to pay and their ability to acquire services.

The problem with the limited discussion that did take place was that there was no consensus or no agreement as to how to define an area service board. There was no agreement on the geographical areas which a particular area service board will manage.

If we look at an article which appeared in Sault Ste Marie, you can clearly see that this question is abundantly obvious. It says: "Some favour an area service board without direct taxing authority. Proposed legislation suggests area service boards will have taxing powers." Do you understand that's going to pose an enormous problem to the diversity found in northern Ontario and the population pockets found within northern Ontario?

The geographic models that are under consideration are under consideration at the area municipality level. They are not being led by the government; they are not being directed by the government. For example, in Sault Ste Marie they're considering three models. Just listen to the models that they're considering.

The first model is for one area service board for the region's 145,030 residents, including 46 municipalities within the electoral district of Sault Ste Marie and the Algoma, Manitoulin, Thunder Bay and Sudbury districts, including unorganized townships.

A second model they are looking at is two service boards, one for the eastern and one for the western section of the study area. The eastern area service board would include Elliot Lake, Blind River, Manitoulin Island and Espanola, having a population of 34,000 and encompassing 21 municipalities. The western area service board, which would include Sault Ste Marie, would stretch from Iron Bridge to Manitouwadge, incorporating about 103,000 people in 23 municipalities.

The third model they're looking at is an area service board for Sault Ste Marie, as requested by city officials, for Sault Ste Marie only.

You're looking at one area and three different proposals that have, I would suggest to you, very different geographical areas and very different population bases, which in fact is going to impact on each of those residents in the area service board district. That's the type of confusion and that's the type of struggle the municipal politicians are having to cope with because of the lack of direction they're receiving from the government. So when the government hears that so far the process has only led to confusion and that confusion reigns supreme in the area municipality, that's not an exception to the rule; rather, that is the rule, and that's one of the biggest problems with this legislation.

1900

At FONOM this past weekend, area municipal politicians questioned what exactly the area service board legislation was going to entail. They didn't get the answers they wanted. They weren't expecting that this legislation was going to be tabled this evening. They were surprised when I phoned them. I phoned staff and politicians from FONOM and told them we would be debating this tonight. They suggested to me that one workshop wasn't enough, that there was very little time for discussion, there has been very little time for debate, there has been very little time for the exchange of ideas, there has been very little time for brainstorming, there has been very little time for consensus-building, and as a result they are

very, very apprehensive about what an area service board is going to do to them.

I would suggest to you at this time as well that it's very important for the members in the House, those of us on this side and, I suggest, some on the other side — for example, I know the member for Grey-Owen Sound is familiar with the geography of northern Ontario, because he and I did a little bit of touring in the same areas. But I might suggest to the House that I explain a little bit about the geography of northern Ontario and how an area service board may not be the best answer to meeting the needs of people in northern Ontario.

Northern Ontario has a population of 826,276 people, who reside in an area of 810,412 square kilometres. Northern Ontario is larger than France and the United Kingdom combined, and it is 7.6 times larger than southern Ontario.

This act, the way it's written now, clearly demonstrates that the provincial government does not understand northern Ontario, and I say that with all due respect to the members across the way. The way it's defined, the way it's written, you're showing the people of northern Ontario that you really don't understand that being 7.6 times greater in size than southern Ontario is going to have an impact on how you deliver services. To properly deliver social services to our community, bigger is definitely not better. In large geographical areas like northern Ontario, our communities need social services that are related to the community's needs, based on local decision-making. With this legislation, the provincial government is in effect taking that opportunity and that right away from those people.

I'll use as an example somebody making municipal decisions in Toronto for North Bay, because those are the distances we're talking about in northern Ontario. Residents will be facing those large distances when you set up an area service board to cover that type of area. I only wish it would happen sooner rather than later, but when is the provincial government going to understand that the nature of northern Ontario is different and must be treated differently than southern Ontario and that we must look at providing area service boards that are geared to the area that you want to service as a government? When you set up a massive area service board, it's not going to work for the people. It will work, but it's not going to work for the people.

I guess we have to decide what we're all about here. Are we about the people who elect us or are we about process and ensuring that something works?

If the latter is the case, I suggest to you that if you make no revisions to this act, you'll have a process in place but it won't fit the needs of the people of northern Ontario. That is one of the major concerns the people in northern Ontario have, and certainly people I've talked to today on the telephone and earlier this week, FONOM, are concerned that this is going to be the end result of Bill 12.

Another concern, and I look forward to seeing this concern dispelled, is that this government, the government

that prides itself on being more efficient, is in reality, with its area service board, setting up another level of government for every municipality in northern Ontario, for every area in northern Ontario. Whether it be an organized area or an unorganized area, an area service board will end up being another level of government. I would suggest to you it's a level of government that is unnecessary.

An area service board is not needed to provide services effectively or efficiently. What you are going to be setting up, without a doubt, is a level of government. You may not want to call it that, but that's the shape it's going to take once it's in place. It's going to be a level of government. It's going to require administrative staff; it's going to require a bureaucracy. I would suggest to you that this is not what the people in northern Ontario — in fact, I don't think that's what the people of Ontario want, but because this is a northern act, let's concentrate on northern Ontario.

I believe this is going to be interpreted as setting up regional governments throughout northern Ontario. That's not a stretch, fellow members. That's what the people in both northeastern and northwestern Ontario are suggesting to me and to my colleagues, that this is going to be a level of government that's not necessary. It's going to have a bureaucracy that is not necessary. It's going to have an administration that is not necessary, that can be handled by the municipal form of government that we have in place now.

That's one of the biggest jobs the government will have, to dispel that aspect of this legislation, because I honestly tried, in discussing with my ex-fellow municipal politicians that this wasn't regional government. Let me say I was playing the devil's advocate for the government in this instance. Every time they brought up a suggestion or a question about this being another level of government, I would try to provide them with an answer. Every time I did, they'd come back to the regional municipality of Sudbury.

I want to spend a few minutes talking about the regional municipality of Sudbury, because I believe we have an opportunity here to understand what's going to happen with the creation of area service boards as outlined in Bill 12. Hopefully there will be some changes to it and hopefully there will be some modifications to it so this extra burden of government on people does not take place, because you're the government that was supposed to be against the extra burden of government. I'm suggesting to you that the way the legislation is written, it is in fact an extra level of government.

For example, we know that in the regional municipality of Sudbury some of the services are delivered by the region. We also know that some of the services in the legislation are delivered by the lower-tier municipalities; for example, Sudbury, Valley East, Nickel Centre, Walden and Capreol.

What is going to happen when this area service board comes into existence? We have another level of government. You see? The services are already being delivered by the regional municipality of Sudbury, and those

services that aren't being delivered by the regional municipality of Sudbury are being delivered by the lower-tier municipality.

1910

But Mike Harris and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and the cabinet and the Conservative caucus, in their wisdom, decide that area service boards are necessary for northern Ontario. It's another level of government. In Sudbury, instead of having two levels of government, we're going to have a third level of government. I tried to argue; "No, that's not going to be the case."

The natural question and the question I'll pose in the House, and I hope the parliamentary assistant or the minister or someone will respond, is: What happened to the regional municipality of Sudbury? Is it defunct? Is it finished? What happens to the city of Sudbury and the other lower-tier municipalities? Are they defunct? Are they finished?

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): No.

Mr Bartolucci: Then I would suggest to you — and I thank the parliamentary assistant for responding — that if the regional municipality of Sudbury is still in existence, if in fact the city of Sudbury and the lower tiers are still in existence and you create an area service board, I don't care what you say and I don't care how you cut it, you've created another level of government. And you're the government that suggests that you would not be creating another level of government. Any way you cut it, it's another level of government. An area service board —

Mr Spina: It's a board.

Mr Bartolucci: Let's check the act here. The act says — I believe it's section 38, if I'm not mistaken — that an area service board is a corporation. That's what the act says, okay? It's a corporation and it doesn't have municipal authority, because that's what it says in 38.2, I believe. But if you look over in subsection 41(8), you will find out that the corporation takes on municipal powers when it delivers police services.

I would suggest to you that the regional municipality of Sudbury is already delivering police services. In fact what happens is you are creating another level of government. It's pure, it's simple, it's dried, and it's definitely what the perception is in northern Ontario, not only by the politicians but by the people who are going to be affected by this area service board. I would suggest to you that you have to have some clarification on that. That's a real concern.

Accountability is another factor that certainly the people in northern Ontario, the politicians in particular, are concerned about. This is not an elected board; this is an appointed board. If it's an appointed board, it shouldn't have the power to tax.

Interjection.

Mr Bartolucci: It does have the power. I would suggest to you that you will have a great deal of difficulty justifying to AMO that a special-purpose body that is unaccountable — that I believe is based on megamania, but I will talk about that later — is going to have the

ability to tax. That, my friends, will never, ever be acceptable to the people of northern Ontario, or in fact of Ontario.

There are some other concerns that people in northern Ontario have. They see this as the first step to forced amalgamation. Maybe their perception is wrong and maybe that's not what the intent of the government is; I don't know. You're going to have to convince us that's not your intention, but past practice would indicate there's reason to be concerned in northern Ontario. I don't think we have to look too far out of this building. All we have to do is look around Toronto or Chatham-Kent and we find out that there are some reasons to be concerned that the politicians in northern Ontario are right when they suggest this is the first step in forced amalgamation — in megamania, if you want to call it that.

If you understand the geographical significance and uniqueness of northern Ontario, if your plan is to have forced amalgamation of municipalities, both organized and unorganized, you're doing a disservice to the people of Ontario. You're doing a disservice to the people of northern Ontario in particular in the way the legislation is written. But that's the perception. All I can do is tell the members across the way, the government members who will ultimately and finally bring the final draft document to us for a vote, that that's another enormous and major concern that the people in northern Ontario have.

I would suggest as well that the definitions of area service boards do not fulfil the concerns that the north has with regard to downloading. I'm going to frame a few of the issues around this area service board and ask the government to respond, not this evening but some time, to some of the concerns that northerners have with regard to this legislation.

For example, they're enormously concerned that with the adoption of area service boards, programs like the northern outreach program, which is already taking a major reduction in money from the government, is going to be lost in the mix, for a variety of reasons. The parliamentary assistant is nodding his head, and that's good, but I believe he knows that the northern outreach program is a very important program.

I have a variety of letters all saying the same thing, a few of which I'll read into the record, because I believe they are important. For those who don't know what the northern outreach program is, it's important that you know that the clinical support provided to both these programs is unique in a unique geographical area.

"Our needs are entirely different from those in other parts of the province, and there is no other vehicle that has addressed those needs so comprehensively. The northern outreach program has assisted in the promotion of a sense of community among those of us dedicated to nurturing these programs throughout northern Ontario. Certainly health care professionals will be forced to reconsider their commitment to the north should there be limited educational support to enhance their clinical competence."

That's from Judy Poupore, the preventive/rehabilitative exercise specialist and director of the diabetes education

and care and cardiac rehabilitation program at the Cardiovascular Disease Prevention and Rehabilitation Centre.

We're talking about a northern outreach program that goes to those areas that you're going to be trying to combine under one area service board.

This is another one, from Laurentian Hospital. You're familiar with Laurentian Hospital because that's the site where the new hospital is going to be built after the two you've slated for closure take place. It says:

"As a northern health facility, staffed by professionals from therapeutic disciplines including occupational, physio and speech therapy, we are faced with the dilemma of trying to meet the demands of health professionals who require ongoing professional development, with the exorbitant cost of this development and the lack of resources to fund these costs...."

"The northern outreach program is a tremendous asset to facilities such as mine, as it provides much-needed support in the area of mailings, pamphlet development, advertising and support during the presentation" of important information to keep our medical experts abreast. "Without their help, much of the professional development that my staff have received in the past five years would not have taken place. Examples of northern outreach support include assistance with workshops on fine motor development, handwriting in the schools, acquired brain injuries, outcome measures and behaviour."

That's signed by Sally Spence, who is the acting program director of the children's program and the coordinator of the Children's Treatment Centre.

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Some of us might think that's small potatoes. Well, it may be small potatoes in southern Ontario, but I would suggest to you that in northern Ontario this is major stuff. This is important stuff. This is the type of programming that must get funding. When we see the minister come with a program such as Bill 12, the people, the experts, the professionals, those in the know, those who are dedicated are concerned that these types of programs will not survive in an area service board as defined in legislation in Bill 12. That's one concern that, although not directly related to Bill 12, certainly Bill 12 will impact upon it and, as such, it's a concern that you, the members of the government must be familiar with and must address at some time during this debate or during the amendments to the legislation.

There's another, I believe, very significant topic that must be addressed when we talk about Bill 12. We have to talk about the recruitment and the retention policies of this government and the effect this particular program is going to have as a result of Bill 12. I would suggest that the government made a \$36.4-million commitment, not for one year, not for two years but for three years, each of those three years, to ensure that doctors would move north — it's that simple — and start life in the north in both underserved and understaffed areas. It's a major concern to the people of northern Ontario. I don't think there's a member in this House who doesn't believe that, in this

Ontario that we're faced with now, everyone shouldn't have equal access to physicians. That's not the case now.

One of the concerns that was expressed to me as I was preparing for this talk this evening was that programs such as this will be lost in the area service board. I said I don't think the government is about that. I don't think the government wants to take these services away. Again playing the devil's advocate, they suggested, "Where are they protected in this legislation?" I went through the legislation with a particular counsel and I must suggest to you and to the parliamentary assistant that there is nowhere in this legislation that those types of programs are protected. I suggest to you that if we're talking about improving northern service, if we're talking about improving northern service availability and ability, then those types of programs must be addressed.

Finally, the section that I want to deal with in a little bit more detail is the impact of provincial downloading on northern municipalities and the regional municipality of Sudbury. This is probably the greatest concern the people and the politicians in both organized and unorganized areas have with regard to this bill. They're concerned — they're deathly afraid in fact. They're not concerned, they're deathly afraid that with the passage of Bill 12, their downloading fears, their worst nightmare, if you will, will be realized and the jig will be up for many small municipalities that will just not be able to afford the enormous costs which will be associated with area service boards.

I hope that's not the intention of the government. I hope the government, in passing this legislation and in introducing this legislation, is not holding a gun to the heads of those small municipalities and, of course, the unorganized townships. I would hope — I pray — that this government has more accountability to the people in northern Ontario than that, but I think I have to illustrate to you just how negative the downloading exercise has been on northern Ontario.

I'm going to try to do it briefly because I want to give Mr Ramsay an equal opportunity to speak, but I want to talk about the per capita costs of the downloading initiative.

The Manitoulin district has the greatest per capita cost and that sits at \$869. Kenora is second, \$694 per capita; Rainy River is third, \$681; Timiskaming is fifth, \$671; and the regional municipality of Sudbury is next with \$540 per person.

The per household cost: Rainy River is number one, \$1,502 per household for the downloading cost; Kenora is number two, \$1,486 per household; Timiskaming is number three, \$1,465; the district of Sudbury is number four, \$1,353; the district of Nipissing is fifth with \$1,264; the region of Sudbury, \$1,242.

If we look at the summary of educational tax available as a percentage of the cost services, you find out that the municipality least benefiting from this will be the district of Rainy River, with 11.4%. The district of Kenora is second, 14.7%; Timiskaming is third, 15.1%; the district of Manitoulin is next with 16%; the district of Sudbury is

next with 17.1%; and finally, the regional municipality of Sudbury at 30%.

If you look at the summary of the effect of the loss of municipal support grants, it's the same story. Timiskaming number one; Rainy River number two; the region of Sudbury number four; the district of Sudbury number five. Do you see the pattern developing? Do you see what's happening with the downloading costs?

In fact, in the study which was done by KPMG using the government's figures — these aren't cooked figures, these are Ministry of Finance figures and Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing figures — they found out that in every way possible the most negatively affected area with regard to the downloading initiatives was northern Ontario and that municipalities in northern Ontario were in the upper 25th percentile, or the top quarter, of being the most negatively impacted.

Ladies and gentlemen, the concern that the people of northern Ontario have is that Bill 12 is not going to address the unbelievable discrepancy that there is because of this downloading initiative. I suggest to you that that concern is real. That concern is causing increased taxes. We're looking at increased taxes within the regional municipality of Sudbury, North Bay, West Ferris. People have no choice except to increase taxes or decrease services.

What I want from the government and what the people of northern Ontario want from the government is simply to ensure that they address those concerns in this legislation. I challenge anyone — the minister, the parliamentary assistant or any member in the House — to show me in this legislation where the people of northern Ontario are protected against these enormous downloading costs. I suggest to you, my fellow colleagues, that it's not there, but that it must be there if in fact the area service board is going to work.

As I wind down and turn the rest of the time over to the member for Timiskaming, I would suggest to you that you pay close attention to members on this side of the House, those members on this side of the House who understand what the impact of this legislation is. Listen to what we have to say, act on our recommendations, and include amendments to this legislation to ensure that if at the end of the day the area service boards come into existence, they address the needs of the people of northern Ontario. At this point in time, they're lacking.

1930

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): I'd like to thank my colleague the member for Sudbury for sharing part of his time. As critic for northern development he had a whole hour, and he was very gracious in allowing me to have some of that time. I very much appreciate it, because I share all the concerns he has about this restructuring that's taking place at the municipal level in northern Ontario.

He was very eloquent in describing and outlining a lot of the differences between northern and southern Ontario, especially when it comes to the municipal level. I think it's interesting for people, in southern Ontario especially, to

realize that there are thousands of people who live in northern Ontario who do not find themselves in any sort of municipal structure at all. They don't live in a village, in a town, a township, a city or even a county, because we don't have counties in northern Ontario. They basically are out there on their own and they pay a tax to — the Ministry of Natural Resources used to collect that tax; the Ministry of Finance collects that now. They're out on their own, and all that is going to change with this because of the downloading that the government of Ontario, the Harris government, has put upon all Ontario.

I'd like to start where my colleague left off, quoting from that KPMG study, which really highlighted how badly and disproportionately hurt the north has been through this downloading exercise. The minister, over time, has said that this downloading exercise would be revenue-neutral, that "All we're doing is trying to reorganize who does what." That's not a bad idea, to look at that reorganization, but it should be revenue-neutral.

But it appears from this study — and KPMG obviously is an extremely reputable firm, a firm the government uses. In this case it was the regional municipality of Sudbury that hired KPMG to do this. But as my colleague from Sudbury said, using the government's own figures, the evidence is in, it's here, that northern districts are paying disproportionately, and therefore the people who live there and who struggle to make a living in the north, primarily in the resource industries, are going to have to pay more.

My colleague had outlined some of the differences in costs per household, which means that families are going to have to pay more in their property taxation to pay for services that the province had previously delivered. When you look at that downloading package that was gift-wrapped and presented to our municipal partners in Ontario, it's a package that should not have been downloaded to municipalities. Areas such as child care and social assistance and public health and social housing and ambulances should be provincial services. They should be provincial services because the province as a whole has the ability to pay and deliver those services, while many municipalities do not have the wherewithal to raise the revenue to deliver the first-class service that Ontarians are used to and should have in the future.

With my colleagues Rick Bartolucci, Mike Brown and Frank Miclash, the member for Kenora, we travelled extensively throughout the north this winter, and already in some of our visits to municipalities there were discussions around council tables to say: "Maybe we cannot any longer afford 24-hour-a-day ambulance service. Maybe between midnight and 6 it should just be on call." Already you're seeing from this downloading of service that they're starting to question the quality of the service for certain towns.

You're not going to see that in Brampton or Mississauga or Toronto or even places like Peterborough, or, going further east, Cornwall, major municipalities in this province. But much smaller municipalities in northern Ontario are going to have a hard time struggling to pro-

vide the level of service that all Ontarians deserve. That's something that all my northern colleagues and I are very concerned about: the potential for a growing disparity in the level and quality of fundamental services that up till now the government has delivered, fundamental health services like ambulance, and social housing, social assistance and public health. We believe that is wrong.

Specifically on this bill, it is the best of a bad lot, I guess. Many of our municipal associations in the north — I've been lucky that my Timiskaming Municipal Association as well as the Kenora District Municipal Association did have a lot of input into this bill. They picked up the ball. They understood they were going to have this responsibility and decided to bite their teeth into this thing and do it. They provided some options for the government and a couple of them have been put into this bill.

I think my municipalities are going to be happy with this and maybe some other areas, but as my colleague has stated, not all northern municipalities or districts or areas are going to be happy with this because it's quite limited in its scope of options. There should have been more options for other areas of the north that have particular problems.

I'm really shocked by these downloading costs and I just wonder how our northern municipalities are going to cope. I believe these downloading figures have been designed so they will not cope. In fact, I think they've been designed so that many of them will collapse.

The whole idea of setting up these area service boards is that once we get this second, upper-tier level of government in place — that is, once the Harris government gets this upper-tier government in place — then, as they did in Toronto, they will knock out the lower-tier governments underneath that, the townships and the towns that make up that area service board, so what you'd have would be a handful of regional governments running northern Ontario. I think they will do the same in southern Ontario, so that maybe right across the province we will see, as the years come on, about 50 municipalities.

I think the reason for that and what's driving this is that this government is intent upon reducing the size of the provincial government. What's happening is that it is finding great difficulty and great resistance to private sector companies among the general public in Ontario in doing that. But where there is not so much resistance in doing that is, put it out to the public sector, ie, municipalities. People would have less resistance in seeing services delivered by another level of public service: our municipalities. I think that's the design of this government.

We will see a continuation of downloading of services and responsibilities to Ontario municipalities, but for that to happen you have to have a critical mass of expertise, a critical mass of size so you can get efficient delivery. That's why this downloading and the restructuring that's all connected to this has to happen.

So you have a major restructuring, and that means a major reduction in the number of municipalities across the province. We've gone from over 700, we've lost 200, and I would predict that if this government is allowed to

continue in its way, we will see somewhere under 100 municipalities down the road in Ontario, a greatly diminished provincial government and more powerful municipal governments delivering a lot of services across the province. While for straight service delivery in some of these areas that might seem to be more efficient, as the service providers would be closer to those to whom they deliver the services, on the other hand, if you start getting into major areas of health care provision, not all regions of this province have the ability to fund these services equitably. That is going to give us different classes of citizens in this province, and that is something I would never want to see happen in Ontario.

One of the funds in there now for the north, the special circumstances fund of an extra \$75 million, is only promised to be there for the next two years. I wonder what the figures are going to look like for our households and individuals in northern Ontario once that special circumstances fund disappears.

It's really interesting that this government has embarked upon this and given this extra burden to northern Ontario on the municipal side, because northern Ontarians in my area, the Timiskaming district, really feel under siege from the Harris government. They really feel under attack from a series of initiatives that the government has undertaken, this municipal downloading being one, Lands for Life being another.

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The idea that in only a few short months northerners can meet right across this province, divided up into three round table consulting groups, and basically divide up the pie of land in northern Ontario as to usage — it's really the notion that we could apply the same principles of urban official plans and zoning to northern Ontario. In fact, I think that's impossible. It's interesting to note that mayors and reeves in my area attending these Lands for Life meetings are wearing Northern Ontario Liberation Army T-shirts. That's the extent to which this has happened, and these are elected officials doing this.

In fact, the town of Cobalt passed a motion asking for a study for the separation of northern Ontario. This is a continuation of a history of this which Ed Deibel had been able to develop in North Bay over 20 years ago. At that time he had been able to build a petition of over 10,000 signatures, as is required to form a new political party in this province. The Northern Ontario Heritage Party was formed. It's still an official party of this province. There has not been a candidate running for that party, but I'm just saying to the members across the way that this is what I am hearing. I think you should take it seriously, as I do.

This is what I am hearing not just from people who derive their livelihoods from resource extraction but from elected officials in my area. It seems to be up again. Ironically, it was back when the Tory government was in power before that this movement got started. I'm saying to my friends in the government party, I want you to take note of this. We're going to have to work to do something to stop this, because I am an Ontarian and I have stated on the record at home that I don't support such a movement.

We're going to have to work this out with this government or future governments to try to make sure that northern Ontario has the strong voice it deserves down here and is treated equitably, but that is not the perception, nor, I will say, the reality that northerners are sensing right now in a multitude of initiatives of this government.

Another one is riding redistribution. As we know, the Harris government decided they would adopt the federal riding boundaries for the provincial Legislature, and that will bring a reduction from 130 to 103 seats in this place where I speak tonight. In some highly developed urban areas that may work well, but certainly in northern Ontario, which is 90% of the land mass of this province and over 7% of the population, we will be losing 33% of our seats, going down from 15 to 10 seats. The people of northern Ontario are very concerned about that. They see it as a diminishment and weakening of our voice in this Legislature, the Legislature for the whole province. That, with Lands for Life and the downloading, the reorganization and restructuring of our municipal structure, contrary to what northerners have built over the years, they see as an assault on our way of life and they're very concerned.

On the local level another assault that is being seen in the Timiskaming area, especially around Kirkland Lake, is the idea that is still out there to ship 20 million tonnes of Toronto or southern Ontario or American garbage into an abandoned iron ore fractured rock pit just south of Kirkland Lake. We have now just completed an environmental assessment hearing that has been scoped on that, so again it's soon on its way to the Minister of the Environment for a possible certificate of approval. That means the proponent can market that site to, I suppose, the United States or southern Ontario municipalities to put 20 million tonnes of garbage into that pit. What is interesting is that it will require, according to the proponent and the plan, 125 years of active pumping to make sure that the leachate, the toxic soup that is a product of decaying household garbage, does not get out into the environment. A very elaborate pumping system has to be put in place and it has to work absolutely perfectly and it has to do so for over 125 years. After that, a passive system will kick in for another 800 to 900 years.

Madam Speaker, being interested in the environment, as I know you are, I consider it an absurd notion that for 20 years of increased economic activity in the Timiskaming area, we would basically burden 20 to 30 generations of people ahead of us with the care of that site to make sure that the environment does not get polluted. I think that is absolutely wrong and I cannot believe that any jurisdiction in the world today would condemn the future with that sort of responsibility.

I can imagine a discussion in 200 or 300 years in Timiskaming around a council table or maybe around a kitchen table, people just scratching their heads and saying: "What were they thinking of back there in the late 1990s? What were they thinking of that they put 20 million tonnes of household waste in a fractured rock pit and asked us, 300, 400, 500, 600, 800 years later to take care of it for them, just because they wanted a little boost to their

economy for 20 years?" It just doesn't make sense. I guess it's just the dollars talking.

This is not an environmental problem; this is basically a site that's chasing a problem. It's wrong. I don't know what the Environmental Assessment Board is going to recommend to the minister and I don't know what the minister is going to do after that, but it's absolutely an incredible, astounding proposal. It seems the government is looking with favour towards this project, and I say to the government members, you should look before this gets any further, because this is absolutely wrong.

I'll say to you too that if you think the anger that is developing in my area in regard to these issues before us today, such as in Bill 12, with the development of the area service boards, the downloading, the restructuring, Lands for Life, and riding redistribution — just wait for the reaction you're going to see from the people in my area. The vast majority of the people in my area, I would say now over 90% of the people in my area, are against this. Just wait until you see the reaction if this thing is given the go-ahead. In that wonderful little clay belt agricultural area where most of us live and farm and derive our livelihood, people working on that 40-mile-by-40-mile clay belt area will not tolerate, 200 metres above us, this large tailings pond filled with these toxins from this leachate system just sitting there. It's just not the right thing to do.

It's the arrogance of technology and the absolute belief in the infallibility of engineering that has brought us to this stage. I would remind us, as we have been reminded by popular culture of late, of other examples in the past where absolute belief in the infallibility of engineering and technology brought us to disasters. The Titanic is an interesting example, where there was such arrogance in the belief of the infallibility of that ship that there was not the boat, according to the engineers of the day, to equip that boat with enough lifeboats to get all the people off.

The main difference between the Titanic and this is that the Titanic only put one generation of people at risk; in fact, just the people on that boat at that particular time. This project puts 30 to 50 generations of people at risk, because that is the active life of that dump. It is unbelievable that we would consider such a project.

Again I say that there will be one heck of a reaction from people from all over this province once they start to understand the magnitude of what is being proposed here. After all the years of work and toil that northerners have put into the building of this economy — actually, in years past really developed the initial wealth of this economy before that wealth-generating capacity moved to southern Ontario — northerners will be totally incensed, and I think all Ontarians will be incensed, that this is the way we are to be treated. After developing that wealth and contributing and opening up our hinterland and developing our resources, that's what we're going to be treated with, that as our reward, we will be receiving a wonderful gift of 20 million tonnes of waste from southern Ontario. That should not happen. It should never happen. I certainly will do everything in my power to make sure it does not happen.

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The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments.

Mr Bisson: I enjoyed listening to the last couple of speeches by the other opposition party.

Interjection: What about the member for Sudbury?

Mr Bisson: The member for Sudbury I thought actually raised some interesting points about how northern communities — and it was touched on by the member for Timiskaming as well — have this increasing sense over the last couple of years of being rode roughshod over to a certain extent when it comes to what the provincial government does about decisions that affect northerners.

You're quite right: You're starting to see in the north people talk about secession from the rest of Ontario. You're seeing another political party. There's some discussion actually in your riding, in Timiskaming, of having another party formed in order to deal with trying to head up that whole movement.

I think the government members have to be careful, because northerners understand how important a role government can play in their lives in northern Ontario because of where we are in geography and also because of what happens in the economy. Ford is not going to move to Timmins or to Kapuskasing easily. To attract that kind of investment, you have to have an active participation on the part of the provincial government and the federal government and local entrepreneurs and others to try to attract investment into those communities. We have natural draws such as our resource-based industry. We have the service industry, which is natural, in northern Ontario as well. But to attract some of that heavier investment when it comes to secondary manufacturing is much more difficult to do. Northerners get the sense from the provincial government that when it comes to economic development they really are not in the game, and they're not used to that.

The second part is that they are also, as northerners, starting to understand, and they've always understood, that when it comes to government services such as health, education and other programs that are important for northerners, government again has to play an important role. They see the government withdrawing from that and, quite frankly, are feeling pretty perturbed about the process and about what's going on in the end.

Mr Spina: I will take this opportunity to respond to some of the comments by the Liberal Party members — from northern Ontario, I might add, with due respect. I'm going to keep some of my powder dry, as they say, for my share of the comments a little bit later.

Mr Bisson: Come on, let's go.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): Light your powder.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr Spina: But why hold back?

The interesting thing about this particular legislation is that the objective of this legislation is enabling legislation. This legislation is not intended to force amalgamation. This legislation is not intended to force people to be involved in a process that they are unwilling to be involved

in. This legislation is intended to have local solutions, local representation, local decisions and local responsibilities.

I agree with the concern of the member for Timiskaming where so often southern Ontario and Queen's Park have created made-in-southern-Ontario solutions. I agree with the member for Sudbury when he says that northern Ontario is unique. In fact, I might even go so far as to say that northern Ontario is distinct. Nevertheless, we know that and we appreciate the fact that northern Ontario does have a unique set of circumstances, very different certainly from the major urban areas in other parts of the province. This legislation is intended to permit local representation, local solutions, and the local representatives to take responsibility for their own governance. That is their goal.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I want to simply commend my colleagues from Sudbury and Timiskaming for their observations on what is an important piece of legislation.

I intend myself to address some remarks later this evening to Bill 12, but this legislation deals with a very important reality that more and more Ontarians have no personal experience with. As this political culture of ours becomes more suburbanized, with one in two Ontarians now living within half an hour's drive of the CN Tower in the heart of downtown Toronto, it is hard to imagine the reality that many of us have experienced. If you have not driven from, say, North Bay along Highway 11 to Nipigon, almost 1,000 kilometres in a vast arc across northern Ontario, I think you should do it some day, because if you take —

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): In the summer.

Mr Conway: Winter, I say to the Minister of Agriculture. It's 1,000 kilometres across a great Siberian arc from North Bay to Nipigon, and if you take out of that arc the urban municipalities of Timmins and Kap and Hearst, you have much of the reality of Ontario north of the French River.

As a government and an assembly responsible for that vast domain, a vast domain that we as a provincial government own in Her Majesty's name, we must in the course of this debate think seriously in this modern age how it is we organize, deliver and pay for services in that vast and magnificent land, most of which, I repeat, we own, and almost all of which has some of the lightest population density that you'll find anywhere in Canada.

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): I'm going to restrict my comments to the remarks by the member for Timiskaming because unfortunately I didn't hear the remarks from the member for Sudbury, but I'm assured they were excellent and I'll just rely on that.

In talking about the north, those of us who are from the south traditionally look at the north as an area that has been known for people who are hewers of wood and drawers of water. It's a place of great natural resources, and that's something we need to respect. We also need to

respect the amount of government involvement that it requires to develop that area.

We can't be turning that area into a place where we just draw those resources out and never contribute anything back, and certainly we can't turn that area into a great, big garbage dump for those of us in the south. The remarks from the member for Timiskaming with respect to the Adams mine proposal really brought back to me some memories that I had when we were doing waste management hearings a number of years ago. He talked about the importance of long-term maintenance for that site. It reminds me as well of this idea that we should deposit nuclear waste somewhere in the Canadian Shield up north, which is something I disagree with as well. But I've always been opposed to the Adams mine site as being an area for waste disposal for the Metro Toronto area, and I seem to recall that the member for Timiskaming was opposed to that at some point in time.

Mr Bisson: He was for it.

Mr Lessard: Oh, he was for it, that's right, but then he became opposed to it. He made this big transformation shortly before the last election, which I find kind of interesting. I hope he comments on that as well in his remarks, how he went through this transformation.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Sudbury.

Mr Bartolucci: I'd like to thank the members for Brampton North, Renfrew North, Cochrane South and Windsor-Riverside for their comments.

Might I suggest to the House this evening that if the government could assure everyone that the special circumstance fund was in place permanently for northern Ontario under the name of the northern Ontario investment fund, whatever, this legislation would be much more palatable, because the people in the north wouldn't be fearful of the fact that the downloading costs are so enormous that they may not be able to cope with them.

There's a simple solution to the dilemma the government finds itself in with Bill 12: simply ensure what the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities and the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association want. They want the special circumstances fund made permanent in northern Ontario to ensure that those downloading problems that every municipality, at least at this point in time, 500 small rural and northern municipalities, are experiencing won't happen in the future because there will be a permanent fund to address that. If that happened, I would suggest to you that we wouldn't have nearly the problems you're having with this legislation, with Bill 12.

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Mr Spina: Done.

Mr Bartolucci: The parliamentary assistant for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines says it's a done deal. I'd like him to make it public. Hold a news conference. Tell the people in northern Ontario that the special circumstances fund will be made permanent and will be called the northern Ontario investment fund. That's what the parliamentary assistant for the Minister of

Northern Development and Mines just finished saying. Do it and lots of the problems in northern Ontario are solved.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bisson: I'm glad today to take part in this particular debate on Bill 12. I'm not going to read the title, because unlike most of the titles of this government, it's innocuous and real long and supposedly has a political message in it. But to say the least, Bill 12 is all about creating area services boards.

Let's try to put this in a little bit of context. With this bill, the government on the one hand is trying to create area services boards. The process they want to use in creating those boards is an enabling process within the legislation that I think, quite frankly, is not a bad idea. If you're going to ask municipalities to organize together in a different way to be able to deliver services more efficiently or for other reasons, because there's less money to go around, as is the case now, and you're trying to find ways to save bucks to deliver services, we need to try to find a process that is locally driven. I support that. I think locally driven solutions are always the best solutions for our communities. We don't need to debate that for long, because we understand that they are the people who make the decisions, they are the ones closest to the services, they are the ones with their ear to the ground on what the constituents say. In the end, I think they should be the ones coming up with the compromises that need to be made in order to be able to deliver those services.

When you look at this bill and you read through it, there's much in this bill that I can agree with. I agree with the process of saying, "We're not going to go the Bill 26 route and force the amalgamation process." Rather, under Bill 12 they're saying, "You can form an area services board if you want," by municipalities getting together, themselves working out the details, deciding what the geographical boundaries should be, what the representation should be, what area services they should be delivering together, what the taxation model should be, having local individuals make all of those decisions so that they can figure out for themselves the best solution for their local communities. That I can support. I haven't got a problem with it.

But I think we've got to put this in context with what the government is doing overall. There's another bill that's associated with the area services boards that we're not talking about tonight, and that's the bill that was introduced by the Honourable Janet Ecker around creating district services boards. You've created quite an interesting situation. You've said, "We want municipalities across northern Ontario to, on a regional basis, deliver a number of services, such as housing, social services and district homes for the aged, and we are going to force you, the municipalities, to do that through a forced process in putting together a district services board."

Then you come with this bill now in the spring and you say: "But if you don't like that — at the bare minimum you're going to have to form a district services board — we have this other enabling legislation for you to allow you to create an area services board that will encompass

those services that were downloaded first of all by the province and then organized under the district services board. Through Bill 12 we will allow you to create another model that will include a whole bunch of other services if you choose and bring them into it."

With Bill 12 as it stands itself, as far as enabling legislation giving municipalities the ability to themselves determine if they want to create an area services board, I have no problem. Where the problem comes in is that you're saying on the one hand: "We want you to form district services boards. We have set up the bill through Janet Ecker, the Minister of Community and Social Services. We force you in northern Ontario to do as the provincial government tells you to do. If you want to do something different, here's the legislation by which to do it."

I'm saying that you've got this backwards. Actually, it's not even backwards. What you should have done was not come forward with Janet Ecker's bill; you should have come forward with this bill. If you had come forward with this bill and said, "We want people in northern Ontario to come up with locally driven solutions by which they're going to deliver their services," I think you'd probably get a lot more support on this side of the House.

Talking to people like the mayor of Hearst, the mayor of Kapuskasing, Timmins, Sault Ste Marie or wherever else it might be, my sense is that northerners would say, "Yes, you're giving us an opportunity to do this ourselves, to figure out what's best for us." You're saying: "Go form an area services board. We're giving you the enabling legislation to do so, and you have three years to do it, or else at that point the province may come in and do something else."

There might have been an ability to do that, but what you're doing is you are saying, "Here's enabling legislation but, by the way, don't forget we're forcing you by way of district services boards to encompass certain services and put them into 10 regional geographic boards." On the one hand it's some good news, and on the other hand some bad news. That's the first problem I have with it. The other part, which we're not talking about here tonight, was the bill created by the Minister of Community and Social Services.

The second thing you are doing in this bill which I have great problems with is the move on the part of the provincial government to tax at a higher level unorganized communities. This might be a bit of a foreign concept to some people living south of the French River because by and large you have regional governments, but north of the French River we don't have regional governments the way you have down here. We have a number of areas that are called unorganized communities where people decide and choose to live outside of urban areas. They dig their own wells; they do their own septic systems; they bring their own garbage to the garbage dump. They provide all of their own services, and in many cases they organize to plow their own roads. But that's a decision that they make to live in an unorganized community.

By way of this bill, you're going to force these people, who now pay a provincial land tax to the province which amounts to \$100 or \$200 a year, whatever the rate is now, to pay much larger property taxes. For example, if in the city of Timmins you are paying \$2,100 or \$2,400 a year, depending on your house, in municipal taxes, if you're caught up in one of these area services boards and you're taxed at levels comparable to the communities around us, I would argue those people in the unorganized communities are going to see their property taxes go up dramatically.

What are they going to get in return? Is anybody going to come and pick up their garbage? No. Is anybody going to come over and make sure their water system is working? No. Is anybody going to ensure that they have a good sewer system? No. None of the services that we take for granted living in urban communities like Timmins, Cochrane, Iroquois Falls or wherever it might be are going to be delivered by the municipality, the new area services board, under what you're proposing. So what people are going to see is —

Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand): — talking about Cayuga.

Mr Bisson: There's a different reality in northern Ontario, and that's what I'm trying to point out here.

South of the French River you have district governments. They've been doing much of this stuff for a long time, and people over the period of years have seen their taxes adjusted accordingly. But what you're going to see through this bill north of the French River is one morning you're going to wake up and, wham, you're going to have a huge municipal tax bill where you never had one before.

The point I want to make, and I plead on behalf of those people living in unorganized communities, is that they made a choice to go live outside of the urban communities. They've gone through the expense of building their homes, of building their water system, their wells, of travelling and doing all the stuff that they did knowing that they were going to get absolutely no municipal services. The exchange is that they paid a provincial land tax rather than paying municipal taxes. Now all of a sudden you're going to come back in and you're going to say to these people, "You're going to be taxed just like the people who live in Timmins or in Red Lake or in Hearst or in Ear Falls or wherever it might be."

I'm saying, like it or not, and you can defend this whatever way you want as a government, those people are going to see this as a tax grab and they're going to see this as taxation without representation. That's how people are going to view it.

If the government were to say to me today, "Listen, Mr Bisson, municipal critic for the NDP, we're prepared to go the way of enabling legislation around ASBs, but we're not going to force people to pay higher taxes in unorganized communities," it might be a little bit easier to get my support. But for me to stand here as a northern member representing, quite frankly, a lot of people who live in unorganized communities who are going to see their taxes go up, I've great difficulty supporting that aspect of the bill.

One of the things that I ask you through this debate — because you will get it at second reading. We understand that. The government has the majority in the House and they will have this bill passed and the bill will go to committee. I want you to reflect on how we can amend this bill at least at the committee level to deal with some sort of transitional system or some sort of exclusion for people who live in unorganized communities. They don't get those services, and I think we need to try to figure out some way that these people all of a sudden don't wake up a year after this bill is enacted and, wham, they're faced with a huge municipal bill. I've talked to a number of different people on this within the government. I've also talked to some people within the ministry. The way they explained it, it sounds a bit innocuous at first, but the point is, the long and the short of the story is, people who never got one before are going to get a municipal tax bill. We need to try to figure out a way to do that.

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One of the things I ask before I go on to the other parts of the bill is, if this thing does go to committee, which I imagine it will, we need to try to find a way to do some sort of a transition when it comes to how we deal with unorganized communities. You can't at this point in the game, where somebody's been paying a provincial land tax, say, "You're going to see your municipal taxes go up by 1,000%." It wouldn't be all that far off. If you're paying \$200 a year and all of a sudden you're having to pay \$2,000, that's a pretty hefty increase. We need to try to find a way to do that.

I remind the government that they supposedly are going to try to do that when it comes to the migration from the old taxation system of Toronto to the new assessment system you put in place. There's been some discussion about how you do that. Under Bill 15, you're putting caps so that businesses in those communities of Toronto aren't going to see their taxes go up by more than 2.5% if their municipal councils decide to use that particular cap process. I'm just saying that when it comes to unorganized communities we need to try to find some way to protect the residents in those communities from seeing huge increases.

I have to say that if you're living in an unorganized community somewhere 50, 60 miles out of town — for example, I know people who live out at Star Lake, out at Keefer Lake, out at Opishong, up by Joe's Half Way and areas like that in unorganized communities. They're having pretty heavy expenses. They have to travel in every day to go to work at Kidd Creek Mines or Royal Oak or wherever it is. There are added expenses of living there because you choose to live in an unorganized community.

They move out there saying: "Oh yeah, I'll have to pay more for gas and heat and hydro and all that stuff, but it's offset because I'm having to pay less municipal taxes. I'm still having to pay more but I'm accepting to pay that additional because I want the lifestyle." If the government enacts this bill the way it is, these people are going to see they've still got to pay the high cost of staying out there by virtue of higher hydro bills; higher gas bills because

there's no gas out there, you have to use propane; higher transportation costs. Then they're going to see a municipal increase.

The other issue that's extremely important, other than just the taxation issue when it comes to unorganized communities, is the issue of how these people are going to get representation. It is proposed in this bill that once this legislation is enacted and municipalities decide that they want to create an ASB, the way this bill is written, the province will appoint who will represent those taxpayers on the area service board. That's not acceptable.

You're saying that after the next election there are going to be elections and people on the area service boards running from unorganized communities will be able to stand and go through the democratic process. You have to do that at the very beginning as well. You have a process right now that if a councillor resigns in the city of Timmins or Toronto or wherever, what do you do? You do a by-election and you elect the person. I think the legislation under the Municipal Act says that only in the last year of the mandate does a council have the ability to appoint a councillor. I would want to see the same type of provision.

If I'm wrong, I stand corrected. You certainly cannot at the very beginning just appoint a councillor on a whim. It's important that the people in the unorganized communities that may take part in this area service board should have the ability of electing their own representatives. I wouldn't want to see somebody appointed in my community without having to go through the process of a democratic election.

I know this government supposedly stands for democracy. As I believe strongly in the democratic process, I'm saying amend the legislation so that it at least reflects what we see in the Municipal Act. That would be one of the requests that I make.

The other issue around the unorganized communities that I really feel uneasy about is that the process as it stands under this legislation is that if municipalities, and I'll just use an example, in the Cochrane district — Timmins to Hearst down to Matheson — decide that they want to form an area service board and they come to whatever compromises that they want to do, quite frankly, the unorganized communities can have whatever model that is developed under this process set up under this particular legislation foisted on them.

If the unorganized communities say, "Hey, we don't want this," the way I read the legislation there's going to be very little that residents in the unorganized communities are going to be able to do to say, "We don't like this model. We want to change it in some way to reflect the lack of services that we get in unorganized communities, the level of taxation," or whatever it might be. They won't have an ability, because the way the legislation is written, it's driven mostly by the larger communities. If Timmins and Hearst and Smooth Rock Falls and Mattice and Cochrane and Kapuskasing and Iroquois Falls and Matheson decide they want to all of a sudden move to an area service board — I do know my geography, yes — all the

residents within that unorganized area are going to have this process foisted on them. That is not acceptable.

Whatever process we use, we have to try to find some way, not to give more power to the people in the unorganized communities to veto this, because that wouldn't be right either, because there are a lot of people living in the other communities that have a say in this as well, but you have to find some way of giving those people in the unorganized communities some kind of power, so they have some ability to negotiate what's a good deal for them. I don't advocate for one second that we should all of a sudden give them a veto power so they can do what they want, but at the very least I want the people in the unorganized communities to have some say and some power when they come to the negotiating table about how area service boards are going to be formed.

The other thing is that we have to ensure — and I want to put this on the record, because it is an extremely important issue — is that once an area service board is created, if it is created by the municipality, we need to make sure it's not driven by just one community. As a resident of the city of Timmins I understand that in our area we form almost, not quite but pretty close to, the majority of the population within the Cochrane district. But that in no way should give us the power to decide everything that happens on an area service board.

It's very important when creating such a board that the people in the outlying communities have enough power to exercise their will to a certain extent. "Exercise their will" may not be the right words, but they should have an ability, when they to come to the council table of the area service board, to have a strong enough voice that if there's an issue that's counter to their best interests in the smaller communities, they're not overridden by the larger communities. I understand that the way this legislation is written is trying to come to that. That's important and that's something we should have recognized under the district service boards.

I have a great deal of difficulty with the legislative process that has been set up under Mrs Ecker's bill, because that one, the way it's going to be set up, is going to pit larger communities against smaller communities. It's going to put people at odds with each other, where people spend more time arguing with each other about how one's getting away with murder over the other one. We need to make sure that we have some sort of process where — and I hate to use this term, because Brian Mulroney coined it — we create a level playing field when it comes to the power of individual representatives from the various communities coming to this board. So if it's an issue where communities of interest have a particular feel about something, they're not held at bay by just the one community; there needs to be some kind of balance when it comes to that.

Those are my big concerns. To put it very clearly, I support the general intent of enabling legislation. I think that is a step in the right direction. I'm glad that finally after the government created Bill 26, which is basically a government-driven process where they decide what the

community of interests are going to be and how this new community is going to be formed — I like this particular process that says local municipalities can decide. That's consistent with the party policy we have as New Democrats, that says all decisions should be at the local level and then the province should be there to assist and pass enabling legislation to allow things to happen in an orderly fashion.

My objection, however, is that I don't like the idea of taxing unorganized communities. I've stated the reason why. I think it's not a good idea. Also, when you're forming the ASB, the unorganized communities are going to get run right over; the larger municipalities are going to decide what happens. We need to find some way of giving those people in the unorganized communities not a veto, not all the power, not an upper hand, but at least some strength to come to the table to negotiate a good deal for themselves. The other issue is taxation. Those are the issues around the enabling part of the legislation and about the area services boards.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the parliamentary assistant, Mr Spina, who took the time last week, with his staff, to sit down with me and provide a good briefing where I was able to ask the detailed questions I wanted to ask around the legislation so we can try to deal with this in some sort of positive way.

I've got to say to the minister that it is a good thing that he has a parliamentary assistant like Joe, who is so dedicated, who tries to do his job and who works really hard — who I will not support in the next election, however.

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Mr Lessard: You couldn't vote for him anyway.

Mr Bisson: I can't vote for him; he's not in my riding. But I've got to say, Minister, that Joe has tried to do a good job with this. He's picked up the ball quite well and he's been quite useful in helping me to better understand this legislation and try to find ways to be helpful.

I want to go through a couple of issues in the legislation that I need to have clarified.

In section 37, under "Proposal to establish an area services board," it says in subsection (2), "The Minister may establish principles that municipalities, local services boards and residents of unorganized territory shall consider when developing a proposal to be submitted to the minister."

I'm a little concerned about that. We had a bit of a discussion about that the other day with some of my colleagues. The problem is that it almost sounds as if the minister can set up a process at the beginning that could skew things in terms of how municipalities would get together to try to find a locally driven solution.

We know that this government has had a great deal of difficulty — I shouldn't put it that way. This government is seen by municipalities across this province as being very heavy-handed about exerting their authority and their will on municipalities.

Mr Lessard: Tyranny.

Mr Bisson: I've heard people call it tyranny. I've talked to some of my good friends who are mayors and

councillors across this province. I remember the megacity debate we had here in Toronto and I know of the debate that's going on in Ottawa right now and other areas. There are a lot of people who feel that this government has a very heavy hand when it comes to exercising their will about what should be happening in local municipalities.

We see on the one hand that the government says this is enabling legislation, and for that we give them credit, but when I read the fine print in the bill, it says under subsection 37(2), "The minister may establish principles that municipalities, local services boards and residents of unorganized territory shall consider when developing a proposal to be submitted to the minister."

That means the minister can say, "Here's how I view what should constitute an area services board," and set up the rules and set up the principles in such a way that it doesn't leave the local municipalities the kind of latitude they need to get to where they want to go. You may end up scaring people away from ever forming area services boards by doing this, or, on the other side, forcing them into something they don't want.

Some would argue within the government that the minister wouldn't exercise that authority because then he would be seen as having too heavy a hand and he would have to pay the political price. If that's the case, why do you put that section into the legislation?

At the committee level we need to have a few questions answered about subsection 37(2) and clearly understand what you're getting at when you say that the minister may establish the principles. If they're basic principles that are innocuous and are just a process thing, fine, I haven't got a problem. But if the minister can decide in detail what is going to be in an area services board, how it's going to work, what the representation is going to be, who's going to sit on the council, when the elections are going to be and a whole bunch of other things, I've got a great degree of problem with that.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't believe there's a quorum present.

The Speaker: Quorum?

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Speaker: The member for Cochrane South.

Mr Bisson: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I say on section 37(2) that we need to clarify what we're talking about when we say the minister may establish the principles. If they are innocuous principles of process, I haven't got a problem, but if that's getting into the area that the minister can decide what's going to be in an area services board and how they are going to work and what the details are, I have a huge problem, because I believe as a New Democrat that it's important that it be a locally driven process where municipalities themselves decide.

It reminds me of something. This government has a habit of trying to say, "Without government intervention, without the government sending its heavy hand into municipalities, nothing would happen." Nothing could be

further from the truth. I want to remind members, amalgamations across Ontario at the municipal level and forming regional governments and forming larger municipalities happened way before 1995. I think of the amalgamation of the cities of Thunder Bay and Port Hope. I think of the amalgamation in my own community, the city of Timmins. I think of amalgamations that happened in Toronto and Ottawa and a whole bunch of other places before, and it happened how? It happened by local municipalities themselves deciding they wanted to amalgamate, for their own reasons.

I think of the debate that happened in the city of Timmins some 25 years ago. There were a number of municipalities — Whitney, South Porcupine, Schumacher, Timmins, Mountjoy township — that decided they had come to the point where it made some economic sense and some social sense from a planning perspective to form one city called the city of Timmins. At the time there was debate, as there is all the time with these types of issues. There were people on both sides of the issue, some for, some against. There was a long process of discussion at the municipal level, and finally there was a referendum during one municipal election, and the people decided they wanted to amalgamate. The province did the right thing. The Tory government at the time said: "Okay, that's what the residents in the area of Timmins, Schumacher, Whitney, South Porcupine want to do. Fine. We will pass enabling legislation allowing that to happen."

The point I make is that when the government comes into this House saying, "Oh, the 10 lost years. Nothing ever happened before. Oh, it was terrible, the NDP and the Liberals. Oh my God, how awful it was," I've got to remind you, a lot of good things happened in Ontario for a lot of years because people at both the provincial and local levels did the right thing. It really irks me when the government comes in here — I listened to what happened during the debate over the megacity. The government was saying: "Oh, this will never happen. The province has to force the situation." With time, local communities come to their decisions based on where they're at and based on what their realities are and based on what their constraints are. Why? Because, as many members in this assembly believe, as do I, local municipalities are among the most responsible level of government when it comes to delivering services. They are closest to the constituent, they're the closest to the service, and by Jesus, they want to do what's right because they keep themselves close to what the constituents want.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: I withdraw the comment. I didn't mean that in any other way than as "By Jiminy," one of those things. You're right. I take that back.

The point is simply that municipalities themselves will come to the conclusion about how they need to amalgamate when the time is right for them, and the province, as far as I'm concerned, should not be trying to force the process. If the government wants to allow that to happen or wants to accelerate it, there should be positive measures put in place to assist municipalities to do so and to give

them some sort of reward for doing it. But to do it the way we've done it now, under Bill 26 and other pieces of legislation, where it's like forced amalgamation and "If you don't do it we'll shoot you," I don't think is a very useful process.

I also want to raise another concern I have with this legislation under subsection 38(3). This is one that gives me a great amount of concern. It's what happens once the municipalities have decided they want to form an area services board. They come to an agreement, they put together a plan and they send that plan off to the minister and say, "Here is what we've decided to do as local citizens in our community, and we would like you as the minister to approve what we've done and allow us to go forward with the model we've developed." Well, it says here in the legislation, "The minister may amend an order as the minister considers appropriate."

What does that mean? What it sounds like to me is that the minister, once the request is made to create an area services board, can say: "I don't like the idea that you didn't include this particular geographic location," "I don't like the idea that you've not done a particular thing when it comes to representation," or "I don't like your taxation model," or whatever it might be. The minister has quite a bit of power here to amend what the local people have brought forward.

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This is interesting, because this is different from what you put in Bill 26. Bill 26 wasn't written this way, and Bill 26 in a lot of ways is much more draconian than what you've got in Bill 12. Under this one, you've said: "We'll give you enabling legislation to allow you to create area services boards. Go out and do it." Then when the municipalities in good faith go out and do that and come back in, the minister has the power to amend to a great degree the plan the municipalities have brought forward. If this is enabling legislation, I don't think the minister should have that power.

If they're doing something that's inconsistent with another act, that's a different matter and that is dealt with later on in this legislation. But when it comes to what the new community would actually consist of and you decide to do that by way of subsection 38(3), I think you're giving the minister far more power than the minister actually needs to allow this to happen.

The point is, if you're saying this is enabling legislation, make it so: make it enabling, and don't give the minister the power to change the plan the municipalities bring forward and do what he or she considers appropriate.

I know they're going to argue and say: "Our minister will never do that. Don't worry about it. The minister would not interfere once a plan comes before the ministry." Who knows? I've seen ministers of the crown do some pretty strange things over the years.

Mr Martin: Especially the last three years.

Mr Bisson: Particularly in the last three years I've seen some pretty strange things. The point is, if I see this kind of clause in legislation I get a bit suspicious.

One of the things I look forward to as the government moves to amendments and moves to the committee stage of this bill — I think we need to have some discussion about that, and I'm sure a number of municipalities and people who make submissions on this will raise that section and say, "If you're telling us as municipalities, 'Go out and create your own area services board and develop the model that makes sense for you,' and we bring it over to you and the minister can change it and turn it on its ear, we're not interested."

Why would a municipality enter into a process that in the end can be skewed by the minister? Allow the municipalities to do what they've got to do, provided that they follow the intent of other pieces of legislation. Allow them to do that, and the minister's role should be to review the plan, make sure it is consistent with all the provincial policies and legislation. If that is the case, the minister should then pass the plan, should not have the ability to amend it if it's in keeping with provincial policies and legislation.

There is another section of this bill that troubles me. I guess this is a philosophical argument, because the government members took this position on other legislation, when they created the new school boards; they're being consistent, at least, if nothing else. Under subsection 39(4), when we get into the powers of the elected members of the board, it says an employee of a board is not eligible to hold office as a board member.

I know you did this same thing in Bill 160, when you created the legislation to create the super school boards. But I have a great deal of difficulty with it. We, as a government, tried to move the clock forward in this province: We gave people who work in the civil service the ability, if they want to, to run politically. As New Democrats, we believe that all people in our community, all people in our society, if they aspire to run at the municipal, provincial or federal level, whatever it might be, should have the ability to do so.

You've already repealed that legislation; if I remember correctly, that is where they got that particular right. What you're saying in this bill is that people who work for the province of Ontario, for example, could not run for election. Some did in the last election; some provincial government employees ran in the last provincial election. I think that's fine. Some of them ran for my party. That's great; that's their choice. Some Tories ran. As a matter of fact, the person who heads the OPSEU local here in our own precinct ran in Hamilton against our Minister of Labour, the person who brought that legislation forward. I don't agree with his philosophical beliefs as a Conservative, but I believe strongly that he should have the ability to run — and it was the NDP government that allowed him to — because that particular individual had beliefs and had convictions and wanted to express those in a democratic election. I believe that's important.

But in this legislation, you're doing what you've done by repealing our legislation and by creating Bill 160. You're saying that an employee of a board is not eligible to hold office as a board member. If I understand it, you're

putting the person in a pretty tricky situation, because you're saying, "If you want to run, you've got to quit." If you say to the person, "You can run and if you're elected you have to stand down or maybe declare a conflict of interest when you get to a matter that affects other employees," it might be acceptable, but to say you can't run is wrong. In a democratic society, all people who have the will to run for political office should be allowed to do so, even if it is running for a political office they are employees of. If the person works for the Legislative Assembly or the OPS or the greater public service, they should have the ability to run for provincial office.

I think the same should hold true for local office. If a municipal employee wants to run as alderman or mayor, or if they live in area and they're an employee of that area services board, they should also have the ability to do so. I know I'm not going to get you to move on this, but for the record, to be consistent with what I believe is important, I want to say that those people should have the ability to run.

Also, under subsection 39(6), it talks about members from unorganized territories. It says: "Except with respect to the first board, a board member who represents unorganized territory shall be elected by the residents of the unorganized territory...."

This basically means, as I mentioned a little earlier, that when the area services board is first created in the unorganized community, you as a government will appoint who sits on that board, unlike in municipalities, where it will be elected officials who sit on the board. For example, if we decide in the area of Cochrane to form our own area services board, the city of Timmins will pick their representative from their municipal council, and the towns of Cochrane, Kapuskasing and others will do the same. At least they're elected municipal politicians. In the case of the area services board, you're saying, "We're the province and we're going to pick your representative." I don't think that should be the case. Even if it's a term of one year or one and a half years, whatever it is, I think we should allow a local election to choose who that representative is.

The province will argue that it's a question of cost: "We don't want to spend more money than it's worth."

The government member is looking at me. It's in the legislation. Read it. It's subsection 39(6) on page 7.

I think it's important that we respect the democratic process and say, "We understand that it's going to be expensive to run a municipal election for the people who want to represent the unorganized communities; we understand that the term may only be a year or a year and a half and that expenses would be incurred to run an election," but it is only within those unorganized areas, and I think the cost is worth it. Democracy is worth something, in my view. If it means we have to spend \$5,000, \$10,000 or \$25,000 to run a municipal election for the unorganized communities the first time out, I think we should do so and I think we should amend the legislation to make sure that happens.

The other issue is a side issue. I understand why the government is saying, "We want area services board representatives to be elected officials from local municipalities." I understand why you're doing that, because in the end they are the ones creating it and they need to have some control over how the tax dollars are going to be spent and what services are going to be governed and how you're going to pay for it.

But again my fear is that what's going to happen in the long run is that you may end up, probably not even willingly in the beginning, creating regional governments, because what could happen over time is that you give these area services boards the ability to go and get a lot of the soft services in communities now: district homes for the aged, waste management, and the list goes on. I think there are 12 core services they could go and get, and they are going to have quite a lot of services, quite a large budget. They're going to have the bulk of the responsibility for delivering services at the local level, and at some point I think some person somewhere along the line is going to say: "Hang on a second. We should just become district governments. Why do we need an area services board? We're making the decisions. We control a very big budget. We levy major taxes for people within our area services boards. Quite frankly, we do everything else a regional government does. Why don't we just create a regional government?" And all of a sudden there's going to be a pressure by people on the area service boards and others to move this one step closer to what will be regional government.

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I'm not a big fan of regional government. I look at regional governments in places like Nova Scotia and Manitoba and others and, when it comes to municipal services, those jurisdictions have nothing on us. Even in northern Ontario where it's difficult to deliver services, our level of infrastructure in our communities is much better, much stronger and much more efficient in areas like Timmins, Kapuskasing and others where local communities deliver them compared to what you see in places like Nova Scotia.

I had the opportunity about a month ago to travel through Cape Breton, had an opportunity to see many of the communities on the eastern and western shores of Cape Breton, and it was really interesting to talk to local politicians and to talk to local citizens about how municipal government works in Cape Breton, because they have a regional style of government and it has been in place for a long time. When you drive through Cape Breton, there is no infrastructure. There is no cohesion as far as identity of communities. It really is a different world when you look at how municipal governments are run over there. They're run on a regional level.

My fear is that what you're going to do in the longer run, not in a year or two down the road, but five, 10 years down the road, you're going to be creating the argument to form regional governments and what we will end up with at one point is 10 huge municipal governments in northern Ontario that will be the size of the districts as we know

them now and municipalities that'll have virtually no power. The regional governments will decide everything, and you're going to have that at the municipal level — you've already created this at the school board level — and local communities will start to lose their identity. I'll tell you, it's important, because you just have to travel through northern Ontario to see the difference.

There is a huge difference between the city of Timmins and Iroquois Falls and some would argue that it's size. It's much more than size, because if you start comparing Iroquois Falls to Cochrane or Cochrane to Matheson, there are huge differences in those communities as well and they've struck out for themselves their own identity, they've developed the services that are important to them, they've decided to go in the directions they have over a period of years. Some communities have focused more on one thing or another, but they've done that through their municipal governments and their municipal governments have enough power and enough ability with the powers that they have to be able to shape the destiny of their own communities.

If you form large regional governments, what you're going to end up with is large regional governments that'll make decisions about all these communities and those communities are going to be lost in the process. I'm not a big fan of regional government and I very much fear that where this legislation is going to go in the long run is that you're going to end up forming 10 regional governments in northern Ontario.

I want to be on the record as having said that, because I remember having this discussion with local municipalities at the NOMA meeting in Timmins, I guess it was last fall. All of them shared pretty well the same concern. They said, "Where you're going to end up with this in the long run is that you're going to form 10 regional governments which are going to decide what the taxation level is, what level of service has to be delivered for all of the communities within the region." That I think is not going to be a good thing.

We're starting to see it at the school board level. They are making decisions at the school board level now that I think are going to be really problematic in local communities. For example, one of our boards — I believe it's the French Catholic board — has decided to close one of the major schools in the city of Timmins. At this point it hasn't made a big splash in the media, but I think as these decisions start to go on you're going to see people at the regional level making decisions about local communities that'll be to the detriment of their communities.

I envision under this new school board structure schools in communities like Raymore, schools in communities like Val Gagné are going to close because the government has decided through the funding formula that any school that's under 300 is not going to be viable. Those are the kinds of decisions you'll get when you have large regional government. You look at things from a dollars-and-cents perspective and you just look at it from that alone, and you make decisions. There might be a dollars-and-cents perspective in closing a school in Raymore, you

might save a few bucks, but I'll tell you, you'll destroy that community.

The school is everything. It's where people go to meet as a community when they want to talk about issues that are important to them, when they get together to celebrate things that happen in the community of Raymore, when a play is going on in the community, anything. That's where it happens. It is the centre of the community. You pull the school out of a community like that, your government may end up saving a few bucks, but the cost to that community when it comes to its identity and its ability to survive as a community really withers away — not to speak about what it means to the kids.

You're going to have to put kids in kindergarten, because there won't be any pre-kindergarten in about a year's time with this government. But starting at the kindergarten level up until the time they've finished high school, these kids are going to have to travel on the bus, depending on what school they're going to, 30 minutes to an hour every day just one way. You're going to see kids commuting long distances unnecessarily because the government says, "We want to save a few bucks." If you start to balance off that cost, the social cost and the cost to the families and the children, I think the money saved is a pittance compared to what it will cost over the longer term. That's what you get when you form regional governments: You end up with decisions at the regional level that a lot of times do not have a good anchoring in what is important to a local community.

The other thing they're doing in the legislation, and in the time I've got left I want to talk about it, is something that the government — this has been championed by members like Mr Gilchrist and others who were big fans of this when we started moving towards eliminating a number of ridings in this province. I remember when the government introduced legislation to reduce the number of seats from 130 to 103, northern members like Mr Martin, Mr Wood, myself, Mr Wildman, M^{me} Martel, Mr Hampton and others said, "Listen, these are huge ridings you're doing, and creating huge ridings will make it very difficult for people to have access to their government through their member." The response we got was: "Oh, well, people can do it by teleconference. People can organize themselves by way of teleconference and be able to deal with issues with their provincial member and when dealing with their government." It doesn't work as far as trying to do large meetings of any type. It might work for an individual who wants to have a question answered, but when it comes to dealing with the issues that are important to communities and working in the community as a member, it doesn't work.

In this legislation what have they done? Listen to this. This is an interesting one. Subsection 40(7) reads, "A meeting of the board may be conducted by teleconference, videoconference or other means of distance communication."

Mr Lessard: They'll probably have to.

Mr Bisson: "They'll probably have to" is the comment from my friend from Windsor-Riverside. That might be

the case because of how big these regional boards are going to be.

Interjection: How big is it?

Mr Bisson: I'll give you a sense of how big this is. Our district area service board, if it's created under this legislation, will more than likely be from Matheson all the way up past Hearst into Calstock and taking in Timmins. To drive around to get to a meeting, you're looking at people at the extremes driving a minimum of three hours to get to one meeting. If you get into communities like Timiskaming and the riding of Timiskaming, the distances will be even greater. Can you imagine being in Nipigon or in the district of Kenora and how far you would have to drive to go to a meeting? That is one of the issues.

Interjection: In the middle of winter even.

Mr Bisson: In the middle of winter. They don't even plow the highways any more. The biggest thing they do now is — highways in northern Ontario are safe in the winter because they just close them down. That way you don't have to worry about getting into an accident and flying off the highway. They just close it and they say, "It's perfectly safe. It works real good that way," unless you have to go to the emergency ward or you travel for other reasons.

In the legislation you're saying you're going to overcome these problems and you're going to allow these councils, or boards as you call them, to meet by way of videoconference or teleconference. Have you ever tried to have a meeting with 20 people or even 10 people by way of teleconference or telephone conference? It's impossible.

Mr Martin: And the technology breaks down.

Mr Bisson: I want to get to that point. That's exactly where I'm going.

First of all, the problem is that people don't participate in those types of forums. I had the opportunity recently to give a lecture to some 10 or 15 students by way of Contact North. I'm sure other northern members have had the opportunity to use Contact North. I'll tell you, it is intimidating as the person who has to give the lecture because you never really know who's at the other end, what the response is, what the reaction is. Are they really listening? Are they still there? For all you know, you're talking into air. Every now and then you've got to stop and say: "Is everybody there? Can we go around the table again?"

Mr Lessard: It's not like talking to Joe.

Mr Bisson: It's not like talking to Joe. Talking to Joe is much easier, I find. The parliamentary assistant in northern development, as his predecessor was in the Rae government, is quite a good guy.

Did you sleep in my office okay, Joe?

Mr Spina: Why didn't you introduce the bill?

Mr Bisson: Because I don't believe in regional government. That's why I never introduced it.

The point I make here, kidding aside, is that the government is saying we can do this by teleconference or by videoconference. What ends up happening in those kinds of conferences is that people don't participate, there's no full discussion. After a while, people learn very quickly to say: "Hang on a second. I'm not going to say anything,

because as soon as somebody says, 'Boo' on a teleconference, everybody else shuts up, it shuts down the process and there's no flow in discussion. It doesn't work too well."

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The other thing they say is, "Well, we can do it by videoconference." First of all, that doesn't work any better really, and the other thing is that half the time it doesn't work. How many videoconferences and teleconferences have we participated in as members in various meetings because the people organizing wanted to do it that way to show off the technology? Here's how the meeting goes:

"Hello? Hello? Kenora, are you there? Hello, Kenora? No, Kenora's lost. Hang on. Let's get hold of the operator. We've got to get Kenora back on the line again."

Five minutes later, Kenora comes back on the line.

"Okay, everybody is here. Can we go around the table again?"

That takes about four minutes. You get around the table and you say, "Oh, Iroquois Falls, are you gone? Hang on. Operator, can you get Iroquois Falls back?"

You never finish the meeting. You spend half your time talking to the operator, saying, "Can you get those people back on the line so we can have our meeting?"

I'm sorry, the process doesn't work. Until they come out with "teleportation," as they have on Star Trek, I will be opposed to any kinds of technological meetings. You invent me a "teleporter" — as they call it on Star Trek, a transporter — no problem. Beam me up, Scotty. I'll be at the meeting any time. But until then, no thank you, I'm not interested in any kind of videoconference or telephone meetings of that type. If you're doing a one-on-one, I have no problem with it; it's like a telephone call.

"Hi, Joe, how's it going? Everything's fine up at my former office?"

"Yes."

"Are you doing a good job?"

"No."

"Move aside, I'm coming over."

It's a pretty simple conversation. But once you try to get a whole bunch of other people into the meeting, it is a bit of a problem.

The other thing they do in the legislation, under subsection 40(8), is understandable, I guess, considering what you're doing in subsection (7), allowing meetings to happen by teleconference and videoconference. Under subsection (8) you're saying, "If it is not practicable to open a meeting conducted by distance communication under subsection (7) that would otherwise be open to the public, the public shall be given access to the minutes of the meeting."

In any other government, if people want to pop in and sit in on what we're doing over here, they can come into our Legislature any time and participate. That's one of the tenets of democracy. In fact, in the provincial Legislature of Ontario, as others, we carry it one step forward. People can watch at home, they can flick through, they can see what's happening in the debate tonight, they can listen to all sides of the debate. They can then pick up the tele-

phone or pick up a pen or get on the Internet and send us their thoughts about what we're talking about.

Mr Lessard: They can call you right now. Why don't you just give them the number and the e-mail address.

Mr Bisson: They can call me right now. Give me a call. My e-mail address is: gillesb@ntl.sympatico.ca. If you want to send —

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Oh, yes. You don't know your own Internet address?

Mr Spina: Say it again.

Mr Bisson: It's gillesb@ntl — oh, he does know. Okay. Anyway, I digress here. We're having a bit of fun tonight.

Interjection: We're having lots of fun.

Mr Bisson: We're having a lot of fun, not a little bit of fun. It's pretty hard to make a speech with you guys around here.

Interjection: Thank you.

Mr Bisson: You're welcome. Any time.

The point I make is that they're saying, "We'll just provide minutes of the meeting, and that's how people can participate." I don't think that's good enough. If people are allowed to go to the provincial Legislature or the federal House to participate by listening to the debate, if people at the municipal level can go and listen to their city council or their town council deliberate motions at the municipal level, I think people at the area service board should be allowed to as well. I think having teleconferences or having videoconferences is not only cumbersome when it comes to technology, not only is it difficult for people to participate as participants of that board, but it's going to be virtually impossible for the public to keep tabs on what their council is doing if they're meeting by way of videoconferencing.

I believe strongly as a New Democrat that the principles of democracy are important. One of the principles of democracy is that people have the right to come and watch what we're doing in order to comment, criticize, suggest, support or whatever else they think is necessary for the debate.

I left this part to the end, to the six minutes I have left, because I think this is basically the politics of the bill. I have had an opportunity to go through the technical aspects of the bill. As I said at the beginning, we support parts of this. We like the idea that it's enabling. We like the idea that you're not forcing the process on to communities. But we have problems with what happens in unorganized communities, and I talked about that earlier.

The politics of this are quite interesting. The government has made a decision, and the decision is that it is going to download a whole host of services on to municipalities. They want to transfer soft services that have traditionally been delivered by the province on to municipalities. They want to transfer family benefits. They want to transfer most of the welfare costs. They want to wash their hands of all that service and say, "Municipalities, take it over." They want to transfer land ambulance services. They want to transfer homes for the aged. They want

to transfer issues of housing and a whole host of other services on to the municipality.

Mr Lessard: Public health.

Mr Bisson: Public health. I can go through the list. There are many. That's what the government's policy is. They want to download all those services on to municipalities. The reality is that this is what this bill is all about. The bill is about creating basically a mechanism to deal with the download. If the province was not downloading, much of what's in this bill would not be necessary. Why would municipalities get together to deliver some of these services if they had not been transferred in the first place?

What the government is saying is, "We're going to force you to create a district service board to deal with some of these services, but when it comes to all the other services that we're going to transfer, we'll allow you to deal with the area service boards to deliver these services."

Let's just go through some of the services that you're going to give them the ability to do. As mandatory services that an area service board could deal with you're transferring child care; assistance on the Ontario Works Act of 1997; public health, as my friend from Windsor-Riverside said; social housing —

Interjection: Public health is important.

Mr Bisson: Public health is very important. Yes, it is. Social housing, land ambulance services and homes for the aged. Those are the core services that you're transferring. But then it says — and this is another little kicker in the legislation that made me raise my eyebrows — under subsection 41(2), "If required to do so by an order, a board shall provide...the following services...:

"1. Services promoting economic development." So all the economic development offices in those areas would then be transferred over to the area service board.

"2. Airport service." A huge cost would go over to the area service board.

"3. Land use planning" — big issue. It would mean you would have one agency or one department of the area service board that would do all your municipal permits, land use policy; all that would be done by one.

"4. Administrative functions and prosecutions under part X of the Provincial Offences Act." They would deal with all provincial offences that will now be the responsibility, under Bill 108, of the municipalities.

"5. Waste management.

"6. Police services." What a huge cost that is. In the city of Timmins it's a fiasco, what you guys are doing in transferring policing services on to the municipalities. Vic is pretty upset with you guys, let me tell you. When it comes to the issue of police, Mayor Vic Power, like the rest of his council, is having a great deal of difficulty trying to swallow this last loaf of bread you sent over from the provincial government.

"7. Emergency preparedness and response under the Emergency Plans Act.

"8. Roads and bridges." What a huge cost that is. Can you imagine in the city of Timmins an area service board

taking on the responsibility for all the bridges along Highway 11? Let me just hint something to you. Highway 11: Do you guys know the Trans-Canada Highway, of which you've already transferred some sections on to municipalities? Under this area service board, the minister or the parliamentary assistant can decide all of a sudden, by influencing the minister —

Mr Spina: No, he can't.

Mr Bisson: Yes, he can. He can influence the minister and say, "We want to transfer Highway 11 to the area service board." You will be able to do it under this legislation because it says "all roads and bridges." What ends up happening —

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: The federal Liberals? We can talk about them later. They're going to transfer the responsibility for all those highways on to those area service boards.

For a district like mine or like anybody else's in northern Ontario, that's going to be a huge cost: all the snowplowing, all the rebuilding, all the construction of passing lanes, maintenance of the asphalt, building of bridges. It's going to bankrupt those communities or they're going to have to raise taxes. I think municipalities are responsible. They don't want to go bankrupt, so they're going to end up raising municipal taxes.

You're trying to seem like the smart guy, able to balance your budget, but you're transferring all your costs on to the municipalities and you're saying: "You raise the taxes. We wash our hands. We're smart. We did like that guy did back 2000 years ago." You wash your hands of the whole thing.

Mr Preston: Pontius Pilate.

Mr Bisson: Pontius Pilate, exactly. You're basically saying: "You know, we're smart. We can balance our budget. Let these guys do it," and the list goes on, and any other service designated by the minister.

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The interesting part of the legislation is, it says:

"If required to do so by an order," the minister "shall provide...." So the municipality goes out, forms an area service board and says, "We're going to take the six core services because we're a responsible government." They think they're off the hook, they think they've done a good thing, and all of a sudden the minister goes: "Wham, there it is. You got the highways, you got the bridges, you got the airport, you got everything else that I prescribed under the legislation. Not only that, but you've got the bill, and I've got the great big hammer at the end that says, 'any services designated by the minister.'" That means —

Mr Spina: Bam.

Mr Bisson: Exactly, Joe. You guys are going to be known as "Bam-Bam." That's what is going to end up happening.

I say to the government across the way, I support the idea of creating area service boards by enabling legislation. I fear in the long run it's going to be a creation of regional governments. I fear what it means to people who live in unorganized communities, because they'll see their taxes go up, and in the end this, I'm afraid to say, is going

to be a mechanism by which you download all the provincial services on to the unsuspecting taxpayers. So much for Mike Harris's tax cut. It just went up in smoke with this bill.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Spina: The comments by the member are really interesting, and I'm amazed that he actually filled the entire hour on what was allegedly Bill 12. However, it was obvious to all of us that his comments were very limited on Bill 12, and as a result he resorted to a number of other issues, but I was nice enough not to take him to task on the Who Does What, on the education stuff, on tax cuts and so on.

The key thing he's concerned about is the fact that you're looking at another level of government. Frankly, it will not be imposed, bam, by this government or by the minister. The reality is, and I will repeat what I said about the comments from the Liberals earlier on, that this is enabling legislation; this is local solutions, local representation, local decisions and local responsibility. The objective of this entire exercise is to get the province out of the hair of the municipalities. That's the objective that we are trying to achieve.

He talked about representation and consultation. We've been talking about this now for almost an entire year. I'd be happy to talk about the consultation process I went through. I was very pleased and thankful that the member for Cochrane South indicated that we consulted with him to a great degree, because he works hard trying to represent the people of his riding. It was important that he had an understanding of this bill, and that's what we are trying to do: achieve consensus of all three parties to put something into place for the benefit of northern Ontario.

Mr Miclash: The member of the third party certainly has brought forth some very interesting concepts, when you come to pitting one group up against another group. This is something this government seems to be good at. We've seen them pit municipalities against health unit boards; now we've seen them pit municipalities against unorganized territories. When we take a look at the folks in unorganized territories, yes, they're very concerned about this legislation. As has been indicated a number of times, the Kenora District Municipal Association has said, "Yes, we need something like this in order to get some control over the unorganized territories."

The important thing is that we have to allow this to move on to the next step, to move on to committee, to allow the committee to get hold of some of the ideas, some of the problems that have been pointed out and that we'll continue to point out with Bill 12 as the bill moves across the province with committee — and I hope it would get into northwestern Ontario — to listen to some of the people who are in unorganized territories who do their own garbage collection, as has been pointed out, take care of their own water, their own snow removal, their own waste systems, and take a look at the arguments they have. When it comes to taxation, it can't just be an overnight decision, as the member has indicated, just a bam-type

thing where all of a sudden they wake up to a huge tax bill.

These folks need the opportunity to present to the committee to put forth their arguments. As I indicated earlier, this has certainly been legislation that has pitted the municipalities against those living in the unorganized territories.

Representation was something else the member spoke about. We've seen what's happened in northwestern Ontario in terms of our school boards that have been combined, and the problems that has brought about with representation and the distance factor.

Again, I look forward to this legislation moving to committee.

Mr Martin: I want to take this opportunity to commend the member for Cochrane South, soon to be the member for all of Cochrane because of —

Mr Bisson: The member for northeastern Ontario.

Mr Martin: — northeastern Ontario — what this government has done to northern Ontario with the realignment of the jurisdictions, of constituencies we will represent.

He did a super job of connecting the pieces, because they really are connected. You can't separate anything in this bill from anything else that has gone on that this government has imposed on the communities of northern Ontario. However, I don't share his enthusiasm for the provision in the bill that he suggests is enabling legislation, because nothing this government has done so far has been anything other than imposing everything and anything on other jurisdictions — imposing costs, imposing blame, and at the end of the day, imposing political responsibility. I dare say that at the end of the day when we see the impact of this on the communities we all represent, it will be another of the same old story.

I think it's also important to point out that, actually, if municipalities in northern Ontario want to get together now, they can do so and have done so.

Mr Bisson: Good point.

Mr Martin: Your community of Timmins is an excellent example. I know in Sault Ste Marie a few years ago there was an amalgamation of different communities because they felt it was in their interest to do that. If it's enabling that you're looking for, just leave us alone and let us do our thing.

This is actually all about the download. This is about trying to find a way to spread the costs over more communities, over more people. They know that the cost of paying for the services they've imposed on communities will cost them way more than they can ever produce by way of property taxes, so they're looking for other properties to tax. This is what this is about. It's about taxing more properties in northern Ontario and you won't get away with it.

Mr Parker: I listened with interest to the comments from the member for Cochrane South on the subject of this bill and on other subjects as he seemed to pad out his hour with remarks on other matters somewhat more tenuously related to the bill.

The member was quite clear in his lack of support for our government and in his lack of enthusiasm for telephone conference calls, and on that subject I have to admit some sympathy for the experience of the honourable member. On the subject of this particular bill, however, I'm a little less clear on whether the honourable member supports it or not. I'm left with the suspicion that maybe he supports it and I look forward to his vote on the subject when it finally comes time to make a decision.

This is a bill, after all, which gives freedom of choice to northern communities. It's enabling legislation. It's legislation that allows northern communities to decide for themselves whether they want to have an area service board, and if they want to have one, they are able to have one under the authority of this bill. If they don't want to have an area service board, they don't have to have one. This bill doesn't require them to have an area service board, but it does permit them to have an area service board.

This bill was the result of a great deal of consultation on the part of the minister and on the part of the minister's parliamentary assistant. It's a bill that deserves the support of all members of this House. I believe all members from northern Ontario should look forward to it with enthusiasm and I look forward to the vote from the other side when this matter comes to a vote.

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The Speaker: Response.

Mr Bisson: To the members who participated, thank you very much to the member for Kenora. To the member for York East, I want to make it perfectly clear that I will not be voting in support of the legislation. I think I was quite clear. What I had to say was that I support, on the one hand, what you're trying to do by way of enabling legislation — I could support that — but I have some problems with what you're doing with unorganized communities. However, I don't kid myself. The bill will pass the second-stage process because the government has a majority and I believe the Liberals will vote with you. When it goes to committee, I'm hopeful that maybe we can amend parts of this legislation so that I can give you support on third reading.

To the member for Sault Ste Marie, whom I always respect because he is a great member when it comes to being able to connect all the varying points about what this government is doing, I understand he gave quite a remarkable speech last night in this House exactly around that. I couldn't agree more. This is the mechanism by which you download services. That's what this area service board legislation does.

I revert back to section 41. You have a number of services you're downloading on to municipalities in the first six paragraphs, and then you say, "If required to do so by an order, a board shall provide...." If, in other words, the minister decides to download services promoting economic development, airport services, land use planning, waste management, administration of the Courts of Justice Act, police services, emergency services, roads and bridges like Highway 11, the minister has the power

to download that, and that's what you're giving yourselves under this legislation, and then the wham factor is — wham, bam, thank you, Sam — any other service designated by the minister. That scares me.

To the member from Brampton, you said you want the province to get out of the hair of the municipalities. My God, the municipalities are feeling like they've got an Afro, because you certainly have not been out of their hair in the last three years you've been in power.

The Speaker: Further debate? Member for Brampton North.

Mr Spina: Speaker, you say that with such wonderful enthusiasm. Thank you.

Interjection: Well, it being almost 9:30.

Mr Spina: It being almost 9:30 of the clock, I will attempt to conclude my remarks by that time.

I'm pleased to rise today for second reading debate on the proposed Northern Services Improvement Act. As the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development, I take a lot of pride in representing my northern colleagues across the way as a native son of Sault Ste Marie and as a person who knows northern Ontario well. As an individual, I've travelled from Mattawa to Jaffray-Melick to ensure that the concerns raised by the people in the municipal governments, by the representatives of the various communities across northern Ontario are also discussed directly with a government member, as well as their own local member who just happens to usually be in opposition.

It is a privilege and a pleasure to work on this draft legislation. It's a privilege because, as legislators, we in this House are entrusted with this noble duty to draft and amend and write Ontario's laws. It's a pleasure because this legislation we debate today is the product of a thorough, complete and extensive consultation process. I say that with all sincerity. Let me quote the Sault Star on August 27, 1997:

"Area service boards are an idea that's existed in some shape or form for a couple of decades. As the cost of doing government business soars and the population of many northern centres remains static or even declines, ASBs have been seen as a way to rationalize services over a larger, more sparsely populated area."

I take that as an endorsement of this process.

Since the NSIA was introduced, as the others have indicated, on December 15, 1997, and died when the House prorogued, MNDM and MCSS, the Ministry of Community and Social Services, have convened a series of nine meetings to discuss consolidated service delivery across the north. We had about 550 northern community leaders attend these sessions. ASBs appeared to be the governance structure of choice at most of these sessions.

The NSIA has been positively received in northern Ontario. In fact, three municipal associations — Kenora, Rainy River and Timiskaming — have indicated a desire to create an ASB as soon as this legislation is passed. Twenty-four northern communities have written to the minister personally in support of the Northern Services Improvement Act. That is very extensive consultation,

probably more than any other single issue in northern Ontario, and it's critical that we make note of that. I say that because this is an extremely important item to the members of northern Ontario, to the community and to the people of northern Ontario. It's an opportunity for them to get services delivered that they have not been able to have delivered before. It's an opportunity for them to have services delivered in a much higher degree of quality, and yet the costs can be defrayed among a number of partners in the area in that district as part of that area services board.

We're moving forward on a bill that would allow northerners to pool those administrative resources and deliver efficient services at a lower cost to the local taxpayers, and this really has been a team effort. We've talked about a number of things tonight. We have heard comments about taxation. We heard comments about representation. We heard comments about the forced amalgamations or amalgamation options, comments that the member from Cochrane was concerned regarding unorganized communities. These are very realistic concerns, and I say with great confidence that these concerns can and will be met under this enabling legislation. The reason they can be met is because the local partners, the local representatives, will have the opportunity to address these issues through their elected members.

We had comments from the member for Sudbury about upper-tier government and the bureaucracy and administration that would be a duplication. Frankly, I might see that that is a possible option in Sudbury, with a regional government there. However, I spoke at great length with the regional chair, Mr Wong, who specifically made a trip down to Toronto for us to discuss this very issue in that region. I explained to Mr Wong, as I explain to the member for Sudbury, that this is not an enforced option. Enforced option: That's an oxymoron. Mr Bisson, you missed that. You see, it's not an enforced piece of legislation. This is an optional, enabling piece of legislation.

What it means is that if an area services board, for example, were created in Sudbury district — and that goes far beyond the boundaries of the region of Sudbury — what happens is this: The area service board could have the authority, would have the authority if they structured it in such a way, to be able to contract the region of Sudbury to deliver certain services within that particular area. There's nothing wrong with that. But the key element, the key benefit, would be that the people in the unorganized areas of Sudbury district and other smaller organized communities within Sudbury district would be able to avail themselves of services that they might not have now, or they could get them at a lower cost than if they tried to handle them on their own.

It does not have to be a duplication of services. In fact, if they found that at some point down the road the citizens of Sudbury region and the municipalities of Sudbury and Capreol and some of the others like Coniston and Lively decided that maybe there was an opportunity here for them to change the structure of government, that's an option they could take on their own if they chose. This govern-

ment would not impose that upon them now or in the future. We make that very clear, that this would be a locally elected option for them to pursue.

The members talked about the comments from FONOM and NOMA. Let me quote some of the comments from some of the people. This is a quote from Jay Aspin, president of the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities, now the previous president. Jay says: "The government recognizes the needs of the north are different. We were happy to work with the government during the extensive consultations that have preceded the introduction of this bill and we look forward to working with the government towards its successful conclusion." That's from FONOM.

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Now let's go to NOMA. Neil MacOdrum, who again is past president of the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, says: "The introduction of this legislation means our members can get down to some of the serious work that must be done to finalize their plans to implement local government realignments. The government has been open to discussion...." I repeat that: This government has been open to discussion. "The legislation reflects the various concerns that NOMA has expressed and taken into account." That's a quote from Neil MacOdrum, past president of NOMA.

Just to list some of the services in terms of the process, what we are looking to do here is accomplish an enabling piece of legislation. What does this enabling piece of legislation do? Under the currently created district social service area boards, three social services would be adopted: child care, assistance under Ontario Works, and social housing. The optional services to be picked up would be public health services, land ambulances and homes for the aged, if and only if an area services board is created.

If an area services board is opted to be enacted and created, what's the next step? We go to additional services, and there are nine additional services.

One is services promoting economic development, which can be very helpful on a broader scale to promote tourism and other elements of economic development, job creation and growth on a grander scale than just focusing on a narrow community.

Airport services: This is an interesting thing, because if we look, for example, at the Sault Ste Marie airport, which I understand has been recently taken over by the private sector in its purchase from the federal government — did I get that right?

Mr Martin: Not quite the private sector. Non-profit.

Mr Spina: Non-profit. Okay. What happens with that particular airport is that all of the people in that region generally benefit from the use of that airport. I'm talking about people from Clear Lake, from Blind River, all the way up to probably as far as Manitouwadge, who might even drive to the Sault to use the Sault airport.

Interjection: Wawa.

Mr Spina: Well, Wawa is farther south. Manitouwadge is even farther.

What we want to make sure of, because of all of these people having the opportunity and the flexibility to use these services, to use that airport, is that all of these people have the opportunity to share in the support of that airport service, if that was adopted by the ASB. Even those people in the unorganized territory which Mr Wildman, the member for Algoma, represents will now have an opportunity to share in those services.

We can also talk about some other uses: land use planning under the Planning Act; administrative functions and prosecutions under part X of the Provincial Offences Act so the benefits of the revenue from the Provincial Offences Act can now be shared by all the other communities within that area services board; waste management, an extremely important area of cost and concern to many communities. It can now allow the opportunity for unorganized territories and smaller municipalities to join forces and pool their services so that waste management can be a lower-cost service that can be delivered to the greater area.

Some people asked the question, and I believe the member for Cochrane South brought it forward, "What happens if a particular area within an area services board chooses not to adopt that service?" Let's say, for example, a municipality did not want to participate in a waste management program. What would happen? Well, what happens is that the area services board has the authority, the flexibility and the option to deal with that on their own. They don't need Big Brother — Queen's Park, the Ontario government — to impose upon them a decision.

Emergency preparedness and response under the Emergency Plans Act, police services that the member talked about: These can now be shared over a broader scale around an area services board so that they can increase the services to that particular community. They can increase the police services, the protection and the patrols, at the same time keeping the cost at a reasonable level.

Roads and bridges: Those are very expensive, and we know that. In fact, I was surprised the member for Cochrane South didn't mention the large bridge that's being reconstructed right now in the city of Timmins. That will be a great help in terms of increasing traffic flow through and around that city.

Those kinds of services can now be shared on a grander scale with the greater area services board. Any other services can be designated by the minister, but only upon request by the ASB, if they choose. So, you see, there are a number of services that can be adopted in this.

We talk again about consultation. If any of the members of the opposition claim this government has not consulted, I remind them that last December 16, I met with the northern Liberal Party caucus members. Mr Bartolucci, Mr Ramsay and Mr Gravelle were all there. Four staff members from other offices representing their members were there. On December 16, I met with some staff members from the northern NDP, but no MPPs, even though some confirmed. It really made me want to question whether or not these individuals had any concern to have this bill succeed, but on January 15, I agreed to come back to Toronto along with those members, to be able to discuss this with the NDP members. Unfortunately and with regret, the member for Cochrane South couldn't attend because of a death in the family, but the other people were there. Mr Hampton, Mr Pouliot, Mr Wildman, Mr Martin, Ms Martel and Mr Wood were all there, and at that time we gave them the briefing under the structure.

This act was created by northerners for northerners. At the briefing session that they had, they want to consider it a joke, but the reality is that they were expecting us to come up with one complete, set structure, to hand them a top-down, imposed solution. They really had difficulty grasping the fact that this is enabling legislation, that the model could be created by the local groups, that the communities can design the ASB along the structure of the bill.

The act is flexible. It allows northern communities to accommodate the local distinctions, and they can be created and personalized, frankly, for the various communities that want those services.

I realize that we are winding down. I just want to wind up by saying that this bill has the opportunity to really create a delivery of services for the members, the communities and the citizens of northern Ontario. The reality is that if we can get this bill through quickly now, we can produce a bill in an environment where the communities can get what they want, not what this government needs or wants. If they choose to adopt that, then they can take that.

So we're making progress. We want to stay on track, but if the opposition members delay the process, our hands are tied.

The Speaker: It being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2129.

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Parkdale	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Timiskaming	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines, président du Conseil de gestion
Parry Sound	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Victoria-Haliburton	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé
Perth	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Waterloo North / -Nord	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Welland-Thorold	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Port Arthur	Gravelle, Michael (L)	Wellington	Doyle, Ed (PC)
Prescott and Russell /		Wentworth East / -Est	Skarica, Toni (PC)
Prescott et Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Wentworth North / -Nord	Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Prince Edward-Lennox-		Willowdale	Kwinter, Monte (L)
South Hastings /			Lessard, Wayne (ND)
Prince Edward-Lennox-			Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Hastings-Sud	Fox, Gary (PC)		Duncan, Dwight (L)
Quinte	Rollins, E.J. Douglas (PC)		Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique		Parker, John L. (PC)
Renfrew North / -Nord	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Wilson Heights	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister without Portfolio / ministre sans portefeuille
Riverdale	Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Windsor-Riverside	Klees, Frank (PC)
S-D-G & East Grenville /		Windsor-Sandwich	Sergio, Mario (L)
S-D-G et Grenville-Est	Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Windsor-Walkerville	Kennedy, Gerard (L)
		York Centre / -Centre	
		York East / -Est	
		York Mills	
		York-Mackenzie	
		Yorkview	
		York South / -Sud	
St Andrew-St Patrick	Bassett, Hon / L'hon Isabel (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs	Nickel Belt	Vacant
St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)		
St Catharines-Brock	Froese, Tom (PC)		
St George-St David	Leach, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement		

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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